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GERALDINE FAUCONBERG.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF CLARENTINE.

Mira negli occhi miei, s'al dir non vuoi

Fede prestar, della mia fede il zelo.

GERUSALEMME LIBERATA.

VOL. III.



L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR G. WILKIE AND J. ROBINSON,
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1808.

GERALD DIXON VAUGHANBERG

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IN THREE VOLUMES

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EDITOR OF THE REVIEW

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GERALDINE FAUCONBERG.

LETTER I.

MISS LESMORE TO MRS. LUMLEY.

Highgrove Park,
Dec. 4.

IF ever you participated, my dear Augusta, in the hopes and fears that have alternately agitated me during my residence at Highgrove Park, picture to yourself, and pity, the uneasiness I have lately suffered.

The day after I wrote to you, Mr. Archer, Geraldine, Albert, and his wife, dined at Sir James Charlebury's. We were all invited : but for reasons not very difficult to guess, Madame de St. Hermine and I chose to plead colds ; and Lesmore, without seeking any plea at all, frankly declined the engage-

ment. Clara was delighted at the thoughts of going ; and, dressed with bridal elegance, no mixture of *green and blue* upon her person, departed with a heart as light, I was going to say, as is her head !

The trio that remained, dined together very sociably, and about an hour after we rose from table, Mrs. Everley unexpectedly entered the drawing-room with her work-bag upon her arm, and declared she was come to spend a neighbourly and notable evening with us. We extremely applauded the design ; gave her the most honourable place near the fire ; drew forward a sofa-table, and, armed with thimbles and resolution, seated ourselves in due order, prepared to play the indefatigable housewives.

Ferdinand, meanwhile, though he professes to admire Mrs. Everley's gentle and elegant character, glided out of the room shortly after her entrance, and appeared no more till summoned to tea. We asked no questions as to the motives of his seclusion ; it was plain they would have been evasively

answered, since, in defiance of all his efforts, he looked unusually pre-occupied, and some secret, but not trivial affair, seemed to engross his whole mind. By degrees, however, much of this thoughtfulness abated; and before the conclusion of the evening, we had drawn from him more than one very hearty laugh.

Mrs. Everley was not gone when the party from Sir James Charlebury's returned. Except Clara, who was in high spirits, they all entered with looks of drowsiness and languor, winking as they approached the light, and scarcely able, after being so long shut up in the carriage, to distinguish who was in the room.

As soon as Geraldine espied Mrs. Everley,

“How comfortable a little party!” cried she, shaking hands with her; “what would I not have given for a snug place amongst you!”

“Have you, then,” said Madame de St. Hermine, “paid a heavy fine of *ennui* for your sumptuous feast?”

"A very heavy one, indeed!" answered Albert, yawning.

"I am sure I don't think so," cried Clara, with quickness; "they were all amazingly civil; there was a great deal of company; the house looked very gay, and I won the commerce pool!"

"Not very unnatural reasons, at your age, my dear child," said her partial mother-in-law, "for thinking a visit agreeable."

"Pray, was Mrs. Neville there?" inquired Mrs. Everley.

"No," replied Mr. Archer, gravely; "she was invited: and her absence occasioned some unpleasant animadversions."

"O, you have no idea what strange things were said of her!" cried Clara; "somebody insinuated, that she is in love with Sir Henry Tresilian; and then another person declared, that it was very probable, she only contrived to get Miss Cecil away from Lady Tresilian, as a lure to attract him oftener to Westhill!"

A profound silence, during some seconds, succeeded this unfeeling, and, to most of

those who were present, disgusting speech. At length Geraldine, in a tone of gentle remonstrance, said—

“ These injurious surmises, my dear Clara, were uttered by persons scarcely acquainted with Mrs. Neville, and perfectly indifferent on what grounds they spoke. Here, we all sincerely and cordially admire her, and every aspersion thrown out against her, must be painful and unwelcome.”

“ I need not ask,” said Ferdinand, looking at Geraldine with an air that showed him much pleased, “ whether Miss Fauconberg, *according to the tenour of her bond*, stood champion, amidst so many defamers, for the reputation of her absent friend ? ”

“ She defended her,” cried Albert, “ with a feeling and courage equally honourable to both ! ”

“ I was sure of it ! ” resumed Lesmore, with warmth ; “ such an office well corresponded with the liberal and benevolent character of her mind.”

“ Poor Mrs. Neville ! ” cried Mrs. Ever-

ley, in an accent of unaffected regret, "I grieve for the censures to which she is exposing herself, and really feel for her the liveliest interest. I believe her intentions are unexceptionably pure; the qualities of her heart and mind are, in many respects, bewitchingly attractive; no one can converse with her without imbibing sentiments of affection, and even esteem for her; yet"—

"Pardon me for interrupting you," cried Lesmore; "but, after presenting to us a picture so amiable, destroy not its effect by pointing out the specks that may be traced in it. To how few would it apply at all!—to Mrs. Neville, we must all allow, it seems adapted with the nicest precision. Surely, then, if, in a general sense, she is entitled to so much praise, her cause, on this first doubtful appearance of indiscretion, merits a favourable interpretation; and, from all the good and candid of her own sex, the firmest and most unqualified support!"

"I thank you, my dear sir," said Mrs. Everley, with great good-humour, "for snatching from me the pencil at the mo-

ment I might have injured the brightness of my picture ! Not, however, with a harsh and desperate hand, would I have applied its shades ; but, all circumstances considered, I agree with you that it is better, at the present moment, to forbear meddling with any but the clearest and the fairest colours."

" Would to Heaven," exclaimed Lesmore, " Mrs. Neville had none but such generous and merciful spirits to contend with ! allowance would then be made for the entire and unfortunate state of independence in which she is placed ; a state, that exposes her to the risk of being guilty of many inconsiderate acts, which other young women, at her age, living under a parent's eye, scarcely have even the possibility of committing ; and the most sanguine hopes would be entertained, that no deviations from propriety could be lasting, where the censures of the world, too rashly despised, perhaps, whilst conscious of not deserving them, would be regarded as intolerable, if justly incurred."

Mrs. Everley, whose carriage had been in waiting some time, now rose to go, saying, with a smile, as she gave her hand to Ferdinand to conduct her to it:—

“ You are the most zealous advocate a pretty woman was ever blessed with; and, considering the attachment for another which is attributed to the lady in question, the most disinterested ! ”

She then bade us good night, and, with her attendant, left the room.

“ I don’t feel quite so certain,” said Clara, when they were gone, “ that Mr. Lesmore is influenced by such very disinterested motives ! ”

“ And whence your incredulity ? ” inquired Madame de St. Hermine, much amused by the significant look she had endeavoured to assume.

“ Why, as he is, at this very time, in secret and continual correspondence with Mrs. Neville, he may have the best of all possible reasons for defending her from the charge of being in love with Sir Henry Tresilian : she cannot be attached to two at

once, and, perhaps, he knows himself to be the object of her preference!"

Could enmity itself, assisted by the utmost subtlety of design, have contrived a speech more cruelly mischievous, than chance, the love of talking, and the desire of appearing sagacious, dictated to this flip-pant little busy-body? All who heard it—most fortunately Mr. Archer was not of the number, having the minute before stepped into the adjoining library; but all who remained, seemed petrified with amazement.

"In secret and continual correspondence with Mrs. Neville!" at length repeated Madame de St. Hermine; "Clara, what are you saying?"

"The truth only, I can assure you:—but here comes Mr. Lesmore; don't tell him what I have said, for perhaps he might take it ill."

It would not be easy to imagine a more embarrassing situation than I was placed in by the unprovoked impertinence of this officious informant. Upon the countenance of Madame de St. Hermine there appeared

manifest tokens of inquietude and vexation ; upon the half-averted face of Geraldine, I fancied was impressed an air of melancholy conviction, that pierced me to the heart ; yet, had I not the courage to venture confronting with his accuser, my suspected brother. The charge, however heavy, might, in some measure, be just : *one* letter I knew he had received from Westhill ; might not others, of which I was still ignorant, have followed it ? and if such was the case, what could he say in his own vindication ? and why torment him, in the presence of witnesses so interested in the affair, with inquiries it might be impossible for him satisfactorily, to answer ? It grieved me, however, to suffer such imputations to remain suspended over his head. I could neither converse, nor look round me with ease and confidence : but, observing that Geraldine, as silent as myself, was preparing to retire, I followed the example, and uttering a general “ good night,” left the room at the same instant she did.

Neither of us spoke, nor cast a glance

upon the other, as we ascended the stairs. At the door of her apartment, however, just before we separated, I stole a momentary look at her, and with mingled surprise, delight, and sorrow, observed that her eyes were filled with tears! My own were ready to overflow at the sight: but unwilling to let her suppose her emotion was remarked, I hastily took leave of her, and immediately proceeded to my own chamber.

My mind was painfully harassed during a great part of the night, by reflections upon what I had heard and seen. That the conjectures hazarded by Clara were wholly founded upon truth, I own never entered my imagination. Ferdinand, long since, avowed his attachment for Geraldine; and such was my confidence in his sincerity and honour, that, whatever appearance circumstances might assume, I felt it impossible to doubt the reality of his professions. But how could I clear him in the opinion of others? I had no proofs to bring in support of my single testimony in his behalf; the purport of the letters he was accused of

receiving and answering, I was no better qualified to defend than any other individual in the family. He had never shown the slightest wish of conferring with me upon their contents; and seemed decidedly bent upon withholding from every one else all species of communication concerning them. Yet Geraldine's silent distress, more affecting to me than any sight I could have witnessed, increased my anxious desire of contributing to dissipate the general mistrust. The dejection her aspect betrayed, could alone proceed from disappointed affection; from sentiments of regard for Lesmore, which, though slow to take root, and perhaps scarcely yet acknowledged to herself, might, dating from the present moment, be blighted and destroyed for ever, or be taught by cultivation to invigorate and expand.

The result of these ruminations was a determination to seek with Ferdinand, as soon as he should be visible, a frank explanation; to represent to him the danger of leaving upon our minds at his approaching departure, such disadvantageous impressions, and

to entreat him, if possible, to make a public and explicit declaration of the origin and motives of a correspondence so suspicious.

This design composed my mind; and fully resolved upon its execution, I at length dropped asleep.

At as early an hour as I thought it probable he would be prepared to admit me, I tapped at the little dressing-room door adjoining to his bed-chamber. He opened it himself, his servant having already left him; and I perceived, near the fire, a small table and desk, at which he had been writing.

Surprised at so early a visit, he inquired its cause.

“My dear Ferdinand,” said I, “I am come to give you unsolicited advice, and to put your brotherly indulgence to the test.”

I then informed him of the strange surmises to which Clara had given birth; described their effect upon Madame de St. Hermine, and their probable consequences if they reached the ears of Mr. Archer; and besought him to lose no time in endeavour-

ing to counteract them by the most perfect and unreserved openness.

He heard me to the end without interruption or impatience, and then said, calmly, but firmly—

“ It is wholly out of my power to enter into any particulars upon the subject of the letters I am reported to have received. Were it profitable or pardonable to be angry with a fool, I could be extremely angry with Clara for prying into my affairs, and seeking to make them the topic of conversation: but as the mischief is done, and I know no way of repairing it, all that remains for me, is, to request that you, my dear sister, will never mention the circumstance to me again. You *cannot*, I think, imagine me enamoured of Mrs. Neville; to you, therefore, it is needless to clear myself. Madame de St. Hermine, if she suspects me, will speedily see her error; and as to your friend, she has given me no encouragement to believe my sentiments are to her a matter of any concern.”

“ I do not in the least understand,” said I,

“your present system of conduct. Are you jealous, Ferdinand? Or is she offended? Whence the chilling civility that reigns between you?”

“Upon this subject,” answered Lesmore, “you shall find me as communicative as you could wish: my heart longs to unburthen itself; and few such opportunities have offered for effecting it without interruption or restraint. On my first return hither,” he continued, “after accompanying Madame de St. Hermine to town, the frank cordiality with which I was welcomed by Miss Fauconberg, and the cheerful freedom of her manners towards me, nearly dissipated every apprehension her previous indifference had excited. For some days, the happiest I have ever known, the delusion lasted; and, more than once, I felt strongly tempted, so seducingly promising was the prospect that opened itself before me, to make a full declaration to her of the sentiments I had hitherto almost hopelessly entertained. Whilst wavering and doubtful, dreading to ruin all by my own precipi-

tancy, and thoughtless of any rival, Lord Litchmere engaged me to spend a day with him at Rushley. We dined without any other company, and conversed upon a variety of subjects with mutual ease and openness: but imagine my feelings, when, towards the end of our repast, the name of Miss Fauconberg being mentioned, I heard him, tranquil and composed as is his usual manner, launch forth in encomiums upon her beauty, understanding, and disposition, the most fervent and animated that ever man uttered! I listened to him in silent consternation. No thought of his having imbibed for her such impassioned admiration had ever occurred to me; and, conscious of my own sentiments, a species of remorse assailed me for becoming, though involuntarily, the confidant of his. As soon as it was in my power, without manifest affectation, I gave the conversation a different turn; he asked me no questions; and appeared at my departure, as little suspicious of the nature of my feelings, as, on entering Rushley, I was of his. The dis-

covery, however, that had been forced upon me, dwelt painfully on my mind: I observed Miss Fauconberg with unremitting attention; found myself agitated and disturbed; and was thrown further than ever from that state of security, I had flattered myself with hopes of attaining. The accident which shortly after, befel Lord Litchmere, and its extraordinary effect upon Miss Fauconberg, confirmed and redoubled all my anxiety. From that period, I have scarcely ever known an hour's perfect tranquillity: no day has passed in which some occurrence has not arisen calculated to strengthen my apprehension of their reciprocal attachment: and such is now the force of that belief, that my abode here, from having been the most enchanting that sanguine expectation ever brightened and endeared, is become the most tormenting and insupportable!"

I will own to you, my dear Augusta, that at the conclusion of this speech, my lips quivered with impatience, and could with difficulty be restrained from exclaim-

ing—"She loves you! You are too easily dispirited, Lesmore; I am sure she loves you!" The emotion I had witnessed in her the preceding evening, and various other trifling indications, seemed to justify the consolatory assertion: yet, I *might* be mistaken—feelings very remote from those I was willing to ascribe to her, might have produced those symptoms upon which I was so ready to found my hopes; and if, deceived myself, I contributed to the deception of my brother, what else was I doing, but assisting to imbitter and aggravate his disappointment? These timely reflections, aided by a sense of the delicacy due from one woman to another upon all occasions of this nature, enabled me to temper my indiscreet zeal, and with less eagerness for his satisfaction, but more prudence, to answer—

"You certainly have magnified to yourself, my dear Ferdinand, the obstacles arising from Lord Litchmere's attachment. I have been aware of it, as well as you, for some time; but scarcely entertain a shadow

of apprehension that it will ever be successful. Your doubts and disquietudes give to your manners a constrained, I had almost said, a repulsive character, which must greatly injure your cause. Whenever she sees you easy, sociable, and happy, Geraldine is as unreserved and friendly with you, as you can possibly expect. Nay, I have absolutely known her, when your aspect has been such as might, with reason, have petrified all kindness, endeavouring anxiously, and even soothingly, to restore you to cheerfulness and cordiality."

"I am sensible," resumed Lesmore, smiling, "that I must often have appeared to her in a gloomy, strange, and inexplicable point of view: the sweetness with which she has borne these *petrifying* humours has filled me with gratitude and admiration; yet it flowed not, Julia, from the sensibility of her heart, but from the perfection of her incomparable temper! Infinitely as I prize her indulgence and patience, one such look of uncontrolled alarm, of speechless tenderness and pity,

as the mention of Lord Litchmere's illness has so often called forth, would be more precious in my estimation, than ten thousand instances of that calm, though generous endurance, she has manifested for the apparent inconsistencies of my disposition. I am aware there is no similarity between the circumstances in which he and I have been placed; no opportunity of rendering her service; no personal sufferings have contributed to awaken for *me* any interest in her breast: but were it otherwise—were the privilege afforded me to-morrow of hazarding my existence for her safety, would she feel for any other man the lively sympathy she daily betrays for him?—No; every avenue must be closed to that heart which is already agitated by such powerful emotions!”

“Good Heaven!” exclaimed I, alarmed, “do you then mean to abandon the pursuit? To renounce all hope, and finally to give her up?”

“I hardly know myself what I mean! My situation here, as I have already told

you, is now become intolerable! Tormented by suspense, the duration of which I have no power to abridge, the melancholy with which you tax me, I find it impossible, in such circumstances, to shake off. Why then, the ghost of my departed self, why should I continue to haunt a mansion where the sight of me can only occasion pain? Such as I now am, can I be a desirable addition to any society? And for my own interest, even, is it not better I should, at present, seek concealment from the woman upon whose favourable opinion my only remaining hopes of future happiness so exclusively depend?"

Before I could answer this dejected speech, I heard the voice of Madame de St. Hermine and Clara upon the stairs, in their way to the breakfast-room. Lesmore seeing me look distressed and ill satisfied by the result of our conversation, kissed my cheek; said he was sorry to have given me any uneasiness; and, endeavouring himself to assume an air of unconcern, proposed our going down together. I si-

lently consented; he locked up his writing-desk, and we both left the room.

The comfortless sensations with which I entered the parlour, I soon perceived, were not wholly confined to my own bosom. The instant I cast my eyes upon Geraldine, I was struck by the languor and paleness of her countenance. She vainly attempted to appear cheerful and easy; the effort, however painful, failed of success: and never have I known her, except when under affliction for Madame de St. Hermine, so inattentive to what was passing around her; so silent, and depressed.

During breakfast, Lesmore announced his intention of setting out for Mr. Melwyn's the following morning. Madame de St. Hermine made no observation upon the intelligence; Geraldine looked another way, and affected not to hear it: but Mr. Archer most kindly said—

“ Well, my dear Lesmore, if you are determined now to forsake us, I hope, at least, you will come and participate in our Christmas gaieties.”

Ferdinand bowed, and thanked him; and nothing further passed upon the subject.

Before the gentlemen dispersed, little Emma Cecil, on horseback, attended by a servant, rode up to the house. She was shown into the room where we were all assembled; and surprised us extremely, in answer to our inquiries after Mrs. Neville, by the information, that that lady was going from home the next day, and had sent her to take leave of us, as she herself was returning immediately to Lady Tresilian.

“Is not all this very suddenly determined upon?” said Madame de St. Hermine.

“I believe it is,” answered the child; “for, two or three days ago, I had no idea of leaving Westhill so soon.”

Then, turning to Geraldine, she added,

“I was desired, Miss Fauconberg, to give you this note: Mrs. Neville says it will explain her reasons for not calling upon you before she sets out.”

Geraldine hastily opened and read the

short billet, which was conceived in these terms :—

“ MISS FAUCONBERG.

“ It is with much concern that I find
 “ myself under the necessity, my dear Miss
 “ Fauconberg, of quitting your neighbour-
 “ hood, for some weeks, without taking
 “ of you, and the rest of the dear inmates of
 “ Highgrove Park, a personal leave: but
 “ my journey is so unexpected, and the
 “ time allowed me to prepare for it, is so
 “ short, that no way remains, except this,
 “ of expressing to you my sense of the
 “ multiplied kindnesses you have heaped
 “ upon me; and of wishing you, with all
 “ sincerity and affection, health and hap-
 “ piness during my absence.

“ I beg you to present my best com-
 “ pliments and good wishes to the friends
 “ around you, and to believe me very
 “ gratefully yours,

FREDERICA NEVILLE.”

We perused this note, one after the other, with almost equal eagerness. Ferdinand himself, though probably the best informed as to the arrangements which had given occasion to its being written, entreated, in his turn, to be indulged with permission to look at it. Geraldine handed it to him, whilst Madame de St. Hermine asked Emma Cecil if she knew whither Mrs. Neville was going?

“To Lady Alicia Faulkland’s, a friend of hers, who lives in Gloucestershire.”

Our young informant then, unasked, for in truth we none of us, I believe, knew how to introduce the question, acquainted us, that her uncle was going home with her; and that Lady Tresilian, who is now at her mother’s, would then probably return to her own house immediately.

All these unlooked for, and wise resolutions, astonished us beyond measure: but Mr. Archer was the only person whom they seemed thoroughly to satisfy. Every one else appeared perplexed; looked doubtfully

at Ferdinand, as if suspicious he had been instrumental in bringing them to pass; and scarcely knew whether to applaud or distrust the motives that might have actuated him.

Emma staid with us above an hour, in the course of which, a reply she made to a question I put to her, peculiarly pleased me.

“Are you not greatly concerned,” said I, “at the idea of quitting Mrs. Neville?”

“I am indeed!” answered she, with affectionate earnestness; “and yet, I have often wished to be with my aunt, because I know my absence gave her pain.”

Was not this feelingly expressed towards *both* her patronesses?

Before her horse was ordered to the door, Geraldine took her up stairs, and presented to her a beautiful gold chain for her neck, and one or two other valuable trinkets, adapted, however, to her age. The lovely little creature was delighted with the unexpected acquisitions; said she should remember Miss Fauconberg’s kindness to her as

long as she lived ; and promising, if she was permitted, to visit her sometimes in town, reluctantly departed.

Geraldine sent by her a short, but civil note to Mrs. Neville, in answer to the one she had brought.

Before she rode away, the gentlemen had left us ; and as soon as our female *partie quarrée* alone remained, Madame de St. Hermine desired her daughter-in-law to inform us, upon what foundation she had, the evening before, ventured to make such positive assertions relative to my brother's correspondence with Mrs. Neville.

“ Lord,” said she, laughing, “ what signifies how I came by the intelligence ? ”

“ It signifies a great deal,” resumed Madame de St. Hermine ; “ those who love Mrs. Neville, and wish to think well of her, cannot but be anxious to trace the origin, and check the circulation of any report which may be to her disadvantage.”

Whether from shame, obstinacy, or the desire of tormenting, Clara remained, during a considerable interval, equally insensible

to her mother's prayers and remonstrances. She pouted, looked impatient, and answered fretfully; wearying us to death by the perpetual repetition of the same unmeaning sentence she had uttered at the beginning of the conversation—"what does it signify? I can't remember how I heard it! what does it signify?"

At length, however, Madame de St. Hermine, reduced to the disagreeable necessity of speaking with absolute severity, drew from her a relation so little to her credit, I ceased to wonder she had refused with such pertinacity to give it sooner.

On the day Ferdinand publicly received from Mrs. Neville the letter I mentioned to you in my last, Clara, disappointed in her childish wish of learning from himself whence it came, employed Madame de St. Hermine's maid to make inquiries concerning it in the servants' hall. In a similar manner, she discovered that my brother answered it immediately; and, prosecuting her laudable researches, she contrived to be duly

informed of the destination of every letter that either came to the house, or was dispatched from it for these last three days! This noble spirit of investigation enabled her to ascertain the very hour when each epistle was sent or received, and the precise number to which their aggregate amounted. The last written by Mrs. Neville, of which she had gained any intelligence, was put into my brother's hand, the preceding day, just as the maid came to assist her in dressing to go to Sir James Charlebury's: and Ferdinand's answer to it, she had since heard, was dispatched late in the evening, whilst Mrs. Everley was with us in the drawing-room. Three letters on each side formed the total of her unwarrantable discoveries.

Could you have believed that, from no motive of self-interest, no species of design, no ill-will, even, to either of the persons concerned, any human being, instigated by mere idle curiosity, would have persevered so long in tampering with a servant, for the

purpose of gaining information so useless, and, as I should think, so wholly unamusing?

The confirmation of what had been asserted the night before, seemed to renew and aggravate all Geraldine's inquietude. She never spoke during the contest between Madame de St. Hermine and Clara, and as much as possible avoided raising her eyes from the frame at which she was working: but, when the unpleasant examination was over, a sigh escaped her, and soon after she went out of the room.

I presently followed the example; but forbore seeking or joining her immediately, lest she should, in reality, be tempted to consider me as a spy upon her looks: but, I own, it became impossible for me to remain down stairs, whilst Madame de St. Hermine, though with the best intentions in the world, and the utmost good sense and propriety, was lecturing Clara upon the meanness of her conduct. Such is her presumption, her want of feeling and intellect, that, hopeless of witnessing in her either

conviction or improvement, it appears to me time thrown away, and breath uselessly exhausted, ever to reason or take the smallest trouble with her.

Throughout the day, a sort of gloom overspread the house, for which, though felt, I believe, by all, no one attempted to account, and no ostensible reason appeared. Albert was the only person who openly commented upon the circumstance; and whilst we were at tea, remarked to Geraldine, that he never remembered spending so solemn and silent a day at Highgrove Park. She forced a smile, and said;—

“ It *has* been a silent day, I own; and, for the first time in my life, has convinced me, that the best spirits are not always proof against the influence of bad weather.”

“ If it continues snowing till morning,” said Clara, “ your journey, Mr. Lesmore, must be deferred, for the roads will not be passable.”

Ferdinand assented to the truth of this observation; and then Madame de St. Hermine, not to let the conversation imme-

diately drop, asked him, in what county Mr. Melwyn resided?

“In Gloucestershire,” answered Lesmore.

Geraldine, who was at that moment pouring out her uncle’s tea, performed the operation with such unusual awkwardness, that she first filled the cup till it overflowed into the saucer, then inundated that in its turn, and finally, scalded her hand in attempting to dispose of the superfluous quantity into the bason.

We all busied ourselves in assisting her to restore order amongst her nearly swimming china, and, in a few minutes, enabled her to present Mr. Archer with as well compounded a dish of his favourite beverage, as if nothing had happened.

But the secret emotion which had occasioned the temporary mischief, failed not to be understood both by Madame de St. Hermine and myself. We looked at each other, and our eyes mutually communicated the thoughts that were passing in our minds. Geraldine had heard from Emma Cecil, that Mrs. Neville’s friend, Lady Ali-

cia Faulkland, resided in Gloucestershire ; and the present discovery, that in that very county was the abode to which Lesmore was hastening, seemed to make upon her the most unpleasant impression. I own, it produced no such effect upon me: Ferdinand's journey had long been planned; he knew nothing of Lady Alicia; her house and Mr. Melwyn's might be many miles apart; and I found it impossible to imagine that for the chance of a few occasional meetings, Mrs. Neville and my brother had designedly fixed upon the same county: but Geraldine, it begins to be apparent, is jealous; and from the days of Shakespeare to the present moment, it has never been disputed, that

“ Trifles light as air,

“ Are to the jealous confirmation strong

“ As proofs of holy writ.”

In the course of the evening, whilst she and I were sitting at work upon the same sofa, with a small table and candles before us, Ferdinand, who had been some time pacing up and down the room, and

seemed unable to fix his attention on any thing, came, at length, and placed himself beside me. A complete silence, at first, prevailed amongst us, which, to interrupt, I drew from my work-box a miniature of myself, painted by Geraldine, saying, as I put it into Lesmore's hands,—

“I believe you have never seen this since it has been finished.”

“Never,” said he, looking at it with marked approbation and pleasure; “how wonderfully the likeness is preserved!”

“I am glad you think so, for the kind little artist means it as a present for my mother.”

“And does my mother know Miss Fauconberg's intention?”

“Not yet; but on hearing in the summer, that such a portrait was in meditation, she expressed so great a wish to possess it, that Geraldine has determined to give it to her as soon as she comes.”

Lesmore hesitated, looked at the picture, then at us, hesitated again, and, at last, said with great diffidence,—

“As my mother has not seen it, and consequently would be ignorant what a prize she had lost, I feel strongly tempted to entreat Miss Fauconberg would transfer the gift to me!”

Geraldine coloured; and, gravely taking the miniature from him, said,—

“No, indeed; it is quite impossible!”

Lesmore coloured likewise, and, with an air of surprise at her abruptness, and mortification at her refusal, got up and walked away.

Now the truth is, that had Geraldine been so disposed, she could not with any propriety have granted his request. He was not aware, from having seen it only in a case, that the picture was set, and that at its back, her hair was interwoven with mine, and formed a ground for our two ciphers.

After he had been gone some time, I said to her in a low voice,—

“Will you not account to him for this harsh denial?”

“Harsh, my dear Julia?”

“Yes; from you I am sure he will think it so.”

It was now her turn to hesitate and waver: but at length she answered,

“Explain to him the matter yourself, then, if you imagine he cares enough about it to make it worth while.”

“Do you, then,” said I, with affected gravity, “think the refusal of *my* picture such a trifle?”

“No; I only consider as such the *manner* of the refusal.”

She then threw aside her work, and went to the piano-forte. I immediately beckoned to Ferdinand, and, in three words informed him of the reason his petition had met with so inauspicious a reception. He acknowledged that had he suspected the real state of the case, nothing would have induced him to the presumption of making such a request.

“Pray assure Miss Fauconberg of this,” he added; “and tell her, that all I think myself authorized to lament, is the unwonted asperity with which she spoke.”

“Indeed I shall tell her no such thing! Were it in my power, most gladly would I

accommodate every difference between you, but never, be assured will I do any thing capable of widening the breach."

To this, Ferdinand made no answer; and presently, at her uncle's desire, Geraldine began singing.

The tone of her voice, the expression of her countenance, and the peculiar feeling with which she uttered the melancholy words of an extremely pathetic air she had chosen, struck me on this occasion in a more than usual degree. I thought, that with all her accustomed sweetness, I had never heard her sing in a manner so exquisitely touching; and as I looked at, and listened to her, the tears unconsciously stole into my eyes. When she had concluded, awakening, as if from an affecting dream, I turned to observe the effect a performance so admirable might have produced upon my brother: but his face, resting upon his arm, which was supported by the back of the sofa, was entirely concealed, and all sound of music had for some minutes ceased, before he changed his attitude, or raised his

head. Our eyes at last met ; and I instantly traced in his, unquestionable evidences of the strongest emotion.

“ Oh Julia ! ” exclaimed he, in a low voice, “ that I could but flatter myself the heart of this irresistible creature, was not already the property of another ! ”

He would have added something more ; but the approach of Albert prevented him ; and soon after, he was prevailed upon to sit down to a game of piquet.

Before our usual time of retiring to rest, in consequence of a secret scheme I had been planning for the last half hour, I engaged Geraldine to accompany me into the library, under pretence of assisting me to look into a large edition of Shakespeare, for some passage which had accidentally been the subject of a recent debate. Whilst thus employed (and I prolonged the research as industriously as I was able) we heard Madame de St. Hermine, at the drawing-room door, bidding my brother good night, and taking leave of him previous to his journey.

Clara, the next moment, performed the same ceremony, after which, the two ladies went up stairs.

Geraldine now began to grow tired : “ My dear Julia,” said she, “ I believe you have dreamt of this passage ! There is nothing like it in either of the volumes you have given me to examine.”

“ It is very extraordinary !” cried I, feigning great surprise ; “ I am sure I have met with it a thousand times.”

“ Well, but you will give it up for to-night, won’t you ? It grows late ; the fire is nearly out, and this room feels cold.”

“ Stay, I hear Ferdinand’s step in the hall : he will tell me where to find it in an instant.”

I then ran to the door, called Lesmore into the room, and, when he got close to the table at which Geraldine was standing, said,—

“ Here is a young lady, my dear brother, who, sensible that in her behaviour to you this evening, she departed a little from her

accustomed gentleness and good-humour, is desirous, before you leave us, of making you some apology."

It would have amused you, Augusta, to have beheld their respective countenances during this speech. I uttered it in a voice so calm and easy, that Lesmore entertained not a moment's doubt of its veracity. Surprise, pleasure, gratitude, brightened his whole aspect; and surveying Geraldine with the gentlest complacency,

"I have too often," said he, half smiling, "put the sweetness of Miss Fauconberg's disposition to the test, to wonder at this new proof of her condescension."

Geraldine, from the instant she was aware of the purpose for which I called him in, seemed petrified with amazement and confusion: never did I see her look so completely disconcerted; nor could a blush more vivid have dyed her cheeks, had I made the plainest declaration of all I suspected to be passing in her breast. Lesmore's respectful, and yet animated address, gradually recalled her from this painful state

of embarrassment ; and venturing, at length, to look up,

“ My imaginary apology,” said she, endeavouring to rally, “ has gained me so much credit, and been so well received, that I feel half ashamed to own, Mr. Lesmore, it never entered into my thoughts to make any !—However, since you and your sister appear to agree in thinking my behaviour required one, I am perfectly willing to assure you, that if I really was guilty of any rudeness, I am extremely sorry for it.”

“ I knew it !” cried I, exultingly, “ I knew it, my dear Geraldine, and therefore furnished you with this opportunity of making the acknowledgement !”

“ How very kind of you ! and how little did I suspect, whilst you detained me here, shivering in the cold, it was done with so benevolent a design ! I presume, however, that I may now restore poor Shakespeare to his place ; he has probably performed the whole of the business for which he was taken down.”

With what provoking *sang froid* does this

extraordinary girl always contrive to extricate herself from every little difficulty and embarrassment into which she may be thrown ! I had expected great effects from this ingeniously contrived interview ; nay, the situation of their minds considered, their impending separation, and a thousand other plausible reasons, had induced me to believe, or at least to hope, that it might, in some measure, prove decisive : instead of that, owing to her apparent composure, it nearly ended in nothing.

When the books were replaced, and we were moving towards the door to retire, I asked my brother at what hour in the morning he meant to set out ?

“ I shall probably have travelled many miles,” answered he, “ before you have assembled here to breakfast.”

“ Then I will take leave of you to-night,” resumed I, holding out to him my hand, “ God bless you, my dear Ferdinand ! ”

He embraced me, repeating the same benediction ; and then addressing Geraldine, with a look of some consciousness,

“ We part, I hope, good friends? ” said he.

“ Indeed I know no reason why we should not,” answered she; yet, as she spoke, an expression of constraint sat upon her features; and the faint smile with which her words were accompanied, had more in it of melancholy than cheerfulness. Lesmore took her hand:—

“ Farewel, dear Miss Fauconberg!” cried he,—“ farewel; and if you sometimes deign to recollect the brother of your friend, be lenient to his faults, his inconsistencies, and think of him only as the warmest and most unfeigned admirer of a sweetness and merit that exceed all description!”

Saying this, he raised her hand to his lips, and then opening the door, and holding it for us while we passed, he silently followed us up stairs, and went to his room.

Geraldine hastened to her own; and we parted without making any observations upon what had occurred.

Thus, my dear Augusta, have these determined self-tormentors again separated.

Whilst every circumstance seems propitious to their—now, I believe, reciprocal attachment,—whilst fortune, friends, compatibility of ages, and equality of birth, combine to favour their union, they forge obstacles to it themselves, and with the most lamentable industry, or rather perverseness, mutually agree in harbouring of each other a thousand perplexing distrusts and suspicions.

I have communicated to Madame de St. Hermine the officious step I took last night, and its insignificant result. She laughed at the idea of my commencing plotter; assuring me, that of all characters, it was the one I was least fitted to shine in:—

“ Besides,” added she, “ Geraldine is the worst subject in the world to make, in this way, your first experiment upon. She is gifted with a sort of instinctive faculty of discriminating between the plausible and the real, which enables her, with singular felicity, to detect, at the first glance, and consequently to evade or defeat every species of duplicity, every thing that appears like scheme

or design. This is not owing to a suspicious disposition; no, it results solely from a natural abhorrence of artifice—from the same kind of undefinable, but comfortless sensation, on being exposed to its effects, which we all, more or less, experience on the approach, or at the sight, of any object of antipathy. We are none of us without our *bête d'aversion*; Geraldine's, in a peculiar degree, is trick and deception. Never, therefore, my dear Julia, when you have a point to gain with her, condescend to employ indirect means. Were you ten times a better contriver than you are, she would, without effort, and almost without consciousness, baffle your wisest stratagems!"

"And it is right," cried I, "that it, should be so! else would the candid and honest become the prey of designing knavery; and artlessness and folly be considered as synonymous terms!"

After this, we conversed a long time upon the subject of Ferdinand, and his late clan-

destine correspondence with Mrs. Neville. Madame de St. Hermine acknowledged herself not entirely free from uneasiness relative to that affair—the less so, as it was now become palpable to her, that Geraldine's feelings were no longer uninterested in its event. “But we must leave these mysteries to unravel themselves,” she continued; “I have invariably been of opinion, that every species of interference would be injurious to the cause we have at heart. If your brother ultimately proves insensible to the excellencies of our young friend, she is not, I trust, of so weak a disposition as to devote all her future days to useless despondence and hopeless constancy. The result, if unfavourable, will therefore bring its own cure—infallible, though perhaps slow and painful;—at all events, more likely to be permanent, and complete, than if directed by a hasty or unskilful hand. Let us, then, anticipate the best, and, as heretofore, persevere in observing the strictest neutrality.”

With these words, my dear sister, I will here conclude my long letter.

Adieu. Yours ever,

JULIA LESMORE.

LETTER II.

MISS LESMORE TO MRS. LUMLEY

December 8.

THIS perverse Clara annoys us more and more every day by her senseless caprices. I think she will, in time, wear out the patience even of her mother-in-law and her husband. Yet this latter is unremitting in his attentions to her, and so thoroughly good-humoured, that it would puzzle a less ingenious head to find out a pretext on which to found a quarrel with him. I am persuaded, that if treated only with common propriety, such is the strength of his attachment, he would go on for life worshipping and adoring her, without being conscious of a fault she has. But, thanks to her unwearied provocations, this becomes impracticable: she obtrudes her

imperfections on his notice; and is so exacting, so fretful, and unreasonable, he is compelled to open his eyes, and, perhaps, to sigh at the luckless choice he has made!

These reflections have been forced upon me, by a very unpleasant scene, of which I have this day been the unwilling spectator.

About an hour before dinner, Geraldine and I returning from a short walk we had ventured to take in defiance of frost and snow, found Clara alone in the library, leaning back in an arm-chair opposite to an enormous fire, and nearly asleep over a newspaper, which, before we went out, she had already taken up and thrown down half a dozen times.

As we entered the room—"Dear!" cried she, stretching and yawning, "have you been walking such a day as this?"

"It would have done you a vast deal of good," said I, "to have walked also."

"O no; I never expose myself to a sharp frosty air: it ruins the complexion!"

"You might, however, just as safely have

encountered the effects of frost, as those of fire; your complexion could not have been more injured by freezing than scorching."

She made no answer to this; but asked us what we meant to do with ourselves after we had taken off our walking things?

"We will come down again," answered Geraldine, "and find some employment here."

"I wish," resumed she, stretching more vehemently than before, "I wish I could think of any thing to set about that would amuse me!"

"Shall I," said the good-natured Geraldine, "bring you some of those medals and coins you expressed a wish so see?"

"Yes, if you please," answered she, a little revived; "I think I should like to look at them better than any thing."

Accordingly Geraldine, going up stairs, and loading herself with half the drawers of a small cabinet containing the medals, hastened back to her uninteresting guest. In a short time Albert joined us; he held in his hand some new French publication,

just arrived from town, which he busily employed himself at the window in cutting open. Clara, meanwhile, was languidly surveying the coins which proved to be playthings much beyond her capacity; and she seemed threatened every moment with a return of the yawning listlessness it had been Geraldine's aim to remove.

When the dressing-bell rang, and this latter was gathering together her working materials with a design of going up stairs, she said, addressing Clara,—

“ Shall I relieve you from the trouble, and take back some of those drawers with me?”

“ O no; trust them to my care; I'll bring them to you, perfectly safe, in a few minutes.”

Satisfied with this assurance, Geraldine then left the room.

As soon as she was gone, ceasing almost entirely to attend to the medals, Clara, impatient at her husband's silence and temporary neglect, teased him with a thousand useless questions: but he had now begun read-

ing the first pages of his book, and was so intent upon their purport, that he scarcely heard, and, probably, yet less understood, a syllable she uttered. Extremely piqued, she at length started up, and taking the drawers in her hands, moved with them towards the door. It was shut: but a chair stood close beside it, upon which, had she been so inclined, they might with ease have been deposited whilst she opened it. This simple mode of procedure did not, however, suit her; and calling peevishly to her husband, she desired him to come and assist her.

Unmurmuringly, but mechanically, he arose, and with the book still in his hand, upon which his eyes were earnestly fixed, walked slowly towards the place where she stood. By the time he reached her, the slender stock of patience with which she is provided, was totally exhausted; her fine blue eyes—those eyes from which nothing but dove-like softness could be expected to emanate, flashed with uncontrolled indignation, and, quick as lightning, placing

the drawers under one arm, she snatched from him, with her disengaged hand, the unfortunate pamphlet, gave his head a smart cuff with it, and then threw it to the furthest end of the room!

All this was done so rapidly, that the performance was over before poor Albert well knew what was intended, or had time to escape the assault; and ere he recovered from his amazement, the pretty shrew, finding means now of opening the door without help, made an angry exit.

I was extremely sorry to have witnessed this little conjugal freedom; and felt inclined to reproach myself for not having offered my assistance to Clara in her pretended distress, from an idea, that, had I done so, it might have prevented her coming to such extremities: but, in the first place, I do not like her, and therefore make it a rule to trouble myself as little about her as possible; and in the next, she seemed so resolutely determined to give us this specimen of her spirit, that I question

whether any interference of mine could have warded off the attack.

I made all the haste in my power out of the room as soon as she had quitted it, never even glancing my eyes towards Albert, who, I concluded, would wish for any thing rather than observation after such a scene.

Mrs. Everley and her brother, Colonel Courtville, dined here; Mr. Everley, expecting a friend who was to stay with him only one night, sent an excuse.

Clara, during the early part of dinner, looked sullen and gloomy; and her husband wore an air of such unusual seriousness, that his mother regarded him several times with wonder and anxiety: but she forebore asking any questions, and before we rose from table her attention was drawn to another subject.

Clara was seated next to Colonel Courtville; he had only been in company with her once before: but you cannot have forgotten the frequent mention I have made

of his unwearied disposition to insipid and unmeaning gallantry. His fair neighbour, though by no means dressed in her most becoming smiles, still appeared to him too pretty not to merit some attention; he therefore exerted himself to entertain her: and such is the frivolity or malice of her nature, that, in a very little time, she seemed to derive the utmost pleasure from his attentions. I say *malice*; because I repeatedly saw her observing Albert from the corner of her eye, and the graver he appeared, the more extravagant were her indications of revived gaiety.

At the dessert, amongst the confectionary were a number of little devices containing mottos, which the colonel and she opened and read together, exchanging smiles and whispers, and making such a display of their mutual good intelligence, that Madame de St. Hermine, I soon perceived, became extremely displeased; and never was I more thankful than when we, at length, went into the drawing-room.

Music, for which Mrs. Everley has quite

a passion, filled up the interval between dinner and tea; the gentlemen joined us early; and then was renewed and diligently carried on, between Clara and her new admirer, the edifying little system of flirtation begun at table.

I was truly concerned, on this occasion, both for Madame de St. Hermine and her son; but particularly for the latter. He seemed utterly confounded by his wife's conduct, and ready to discredit the evidence of his own senses. Forgetful of all resentment for what had passed in the morning, his eyes were perpetually turned towards her with an expression of inquietude that would have reconciled and affected any heart but hers: the greater restlessness and disturbance, however, he betrayed, the greater delight she seemed to take in tormenting him: exultation sat upon every feature; and, in the insolence of conscious power, she regarded him with an air of defiance, that showed how much she enjoyed her triumph.

To so blameable a length did she carry

this perverse humour, that whilst we were all engaged at a round game, and she was dealing, her bracelet happening to drop off, the colonel, with his accustomed officiousness, seized it, declaring he could only consent to restore it, on condition he might be permitted to replace it upon the fair arm from which it had fallen !

“ O, no,” cried she, carelessly ; “ it is not worth agreeing to any terms about !”

Now, the bracelet was made of Albert’s hair, and this reply, which brought the blood into his cheeks, induced him eagerly to ask for it himself.

“ Excuse me, sir,” said the simpering colonel, “ I can return it to none but the lady, or—her order.”

“ Well, then,” cried she, laughing, “ put it into the pool, and let fortune decide to whom it shall belong.”

Colonel Courtville obeyed: but Madame de St. Hermine instantly taking it out, clasped it round her own arm, saying,—

“ It shall henceforth be the property of

one who will better know how to value it than its last possessor."

"Very well, my dear madam," said Clara, with perfect unconcern; "I neither wish to withhold that from you, nor the original giver, if the one could be as easily transferred as the other."

Is it not wonderful that ill nature should thus have the power of sharpening the faculties of dulness. I detest the purport of the above speech: but, certainly, in comparison to most of those Clara is accustomed to make, it is lively, and not ill expressed. Are there then two sorts of understanding? one that does duty only when called upon for a spiteful repartee; and the other, a steady, constant friend, capable and willing to assist and direct us upon every emergency? I am inclined to think so; for Clara is by no means the first simpleton I have known, who, when angry, could say as shrewd and biting things, as the keenest wit might have uttered.

When Mrs. Everley and her brother were

gone, this whimsical little personage, detached herself entirely from the rest of the party, and, resuming the same discontented air she had worn at the beginning of dinner, took possession of a sofa near the fire, and seemed disposed, from a mixture of indolence and ill-humour, to fall asleep. Every one else, for it was still early, found some employment, and remained in that part of the room which was best lighted: even Albert, chagrined as he appeared, endeavoured for some time to amuse his mind by reading; but, whether his book grew dull, or whether his thoughts were too much pre-occupied to attend to its contents, certain it is, that, after a reasonable trial, he renounced the attempt: and rising from the table at which we were sitting, began walking thoughtfully up and down the room.

At length, but by circuitous and gradual degrees, he approached the sofa upon which his gentle partner was reclining; no notice, however, was taken by her of his vicinity: and I, who was the only person in the room so placed as to be able to observe

him, would not, for the world, he should have suspected me of such a design. After long hesitation, I saw him venture to seat himself beside her, and attempt to take her hand: but, starting from her pretended drowsiness, she scornfully drew it back, and turned away with the most petulant abruptness. Even this repulse did not entirely discourage him; he spoke to her several times in a low voice, and, to judge by the look of intercession he wore, seemed to be supplicating for gentler treatment. I could not imagine how so ridiculous a scene would end—nor would you, I am persuaded, ever divine. The little hypocrite, when sufficiently humoured and flattered by her husband's humble concessions, applied her handkerchief to her eyes, and deluded him with the semblance of a sentimental fit of weeping!

Now, I will not take upon me positively to assert that no tears really were shed, for these are auxiliaries she has generally at command: but that they flowed from unaffected sensibility, I think you will not

deem me very severe if I venture to doubt. There is nothing genuine in her character but folly and selfishness; and whenever she aims at the fine feelings of a heroine, they sit so ill upon her uninteresting countenance, and give to it such an expression of duplicity, such an air of constraint, that the beholder turns from her with contemptuous incredulity.

The soft sorrow, however, above recorded, was regarded by the husband as the harbinger of peace; and as such, being unsuspectingly trusted and tenderly soothed, he, finally obtained permission to kiss her white hand, and in less than ten minutes afterwards they were both at high romps!

So unexpected a transition from pathos to farce, excited such surprise in the party assembled round the table, that every head was hastily turned, to regard, with a smile, the inexplicable little couple. No observations, however, were made upon their sudden renewal of harmony: but all present seemed rejoiced that they had been able so speedily to accommodate their difference.

Happy would it be could all their future quarrels terminate as merrily!—but of this there appears not a chance. Clara's empire is merely that of youth and beauty, an empire quite powerful enough, when attended by good temper, to fix half the men in the world; but not equal, I should imagine, where peevishness and caprice are united to a weak understanding, to ensure a lasting sway. Besides, Albert, with all his fondness, seems at times sensibly aware of the foibles of his juvenile mate;—they have never angered, but they have surprised and afflicted him; and when the surprise wears off, and the concern alone remains, may not this last, in the course of events, take a character of acrimony and disgust?

But let them settle the point, good souls! how they can. For the present I have done with them, and now proceed to give you some account of our beloved Geraldine.

You are anxious, no doubt, to learn, after so unequivocally betraying the interest she took in Lesmore's proceedings, how she bears his absence, and the uncertainty in

which he has left her involved? Like an angel, my dear Augusta, or, more properly speaking, just as we, who are *her* friends as well as Lesmore's, would wish her. Neither her countenance nor conversation denote the same ease of mind, the same hilarity, she enjoyed some time since: but she finds means, the best adapted to her present situation, effectually to distance all listlessness and languor. Without hurry, bustle, or importance, she is perpetually employed; and, active as I ever knew her, I think her now more assiduous in application, more considerate towards others, more intent upon the wish of benefiting her poor neighbours, or obliging her rich ones, than she had yet, upon any occasion, appeared. When the weather permits it, she walks or rides to the adjacent cottages; hears the grievances of their humble inhabitants; forms plans for their redress; soothes and comforts them with expressions of kindness; and, on her return home, sends, according to their several wants, nourishment to some, fuel to others, warm garments to a

third, and for those who are ill procures medical relief and advice. In addition to these acts of effectual and rational charity, early recommended to her by Madame de St. Hermine as indispensable duties in one gifted with such ample powers of contributing to the welfare of those around her, she attends to the improvement of a select number of poor children, whom she clothes and puts to school. Their dress is neat and uniform; and, were they but tolerably pretty, the interest they could not fail to excite I should consider as ample repayment for every thing that might be done for them! But it unfortunately so happens, that they are, almost without an exception, perfect frights! And yet, at the very school they attend, I have seen several children remarkable for their beauty. The reason Madame de St. Hermine assigns for this obvious difference, appears just and satisfactory. The poor little creatures Geraldine patronizes, are purposely chosen from amongst the most wretched and needy of the surrounding families; ill nursed, ill fed, ill

sheltered, and ill clothed; their very infancy is starved, shrunk, and blighted; and beauty neither associates with poverty of blood, neglect of cleanliness, nor a rude exposure to all the inclemencies of our variable climate. On the other hand, those rosy-cheeked cherubs I so much admire, are the children of substantial farmers, by whom they are denied nothing that can contribute to their health, growth, and strength: thus flourishing amidst plenty and order, they bloom, expand, and invigorate, without drawback or impediment.

So much for our Geraldine's benevolent occupations. Now let me communicate to you a trait, which manifests, in a remarkable degree, that her readiness to oblige in trifles (those *shillings and pence*, as somebody calls them, of social life) fully equals her anxiety to perform all the more essential duties of her station.

The very day after Ferdinand quitted us, recurring voluntarily to the subject of my picture, she said to me, whilst we were sitting together in the dressing-room,—

“ I have reproached myself severely, my dear Julia, for denying, with such unqualified bluntness, the miniature your brother was so solicitous to obtain. Nothing could be more natural than his wishing to possess your likeness; and I can hardly forgive myself for the disappointment I occasioned him. As it is out of my power, however, to make him amends, by resigning the one already painted, do you think you could have patience to sit for a second picture?”

You may believe, that to this good-humoured offer, I opposed no difficulties; and, accordingly, the work was immediately taken in hand, and is diligently and daily carried on. I would not tell her of the portrait in oils already hanging up at Parkton Castle, which Lesmore himself painted of me last year. I know it is quite sufficient to satisfy his fraternal tenderness; but the miniature now begun, wholly independent of the object it represents, will appear to him of inestimable value: first, as being the production of Geraldine's hand; and next, as

being, on her part, a sort of voluntary peace-offering.



Dec. 10.

Madame de St. Hermine has just communicated to me, recommending dispatch in its perusal, a little tell-tale manuscript, which she found, this morning, upon the dressing-room table, amidst a heap of other papers. You will perceive that it is addressed to *me*; though probably never intended for my observation. Madame de St. Hermine thought herself authorized, by what passed some time ago, to look at this fresh specimen of her pupil's poetical talent; and it appeared to her so well calculated to interest and please me, that she could not deny herself the gratification of bringing it to my apartment. I have scrawled a hasty copy of it, which I send you.—

How hard, dear Julia, is the fate
Of woman, gifted with a heart,
Who what she loves must seem to hate,
Nor genuine feelings e'er impart!

Cold apathy her soul must freeze,
 Nor must she dare to heave a sigh,
 Lest some officious, babbling breeze,
 Should waft it to the standers by ;

But fix'd indiff'rence must assume
 When near the man her soul adores,
 And cloud her face in darkest gloom
 When most her heart his cause implores.

How dear, alas ! is prudence bought
 Whilst nurs'd in falsehood and disguise,
 If robb'd of each ingenuous thought,
 We must be wretched to be wise * !

These lines tell a very intelligible story. Madame de St. Hermine and I agree in thinking, they must have been written a day or two before Ferdinand's last departure from hence: they feelingly express the pain it gave her to preserve with him such an air of distance and reserve: they—but I leave you to make your own comments; and shall now indulge myself with meditating upon them at my leisure.

* These verses are the production of a friend.

Dec. 11.

Mr. Archer came up to us this morning, about two hours after breakfast, to inform Geraldine, that our convalescent neighbour, Lord Litchmere, would dine here.

“The last time I called upon him,” he added, “hearing he had already been out once or twice, I invited him to come any day he pleased this week; and he has just sent his servant to say he accepts the invitation for to-day.”

Geraldine heard this intelligence with the most perfect tranquillity, and, when her uncle paused, said,—

“Is there nobody in the neighbourhood who could be invited to meet him?”

“Nobody he would care a straw for! This house, my good girl, contains for him, ‘metal more attractive’ than all the rest of England could supply!”

Saying this with a significant smile, albeit unused to deal in hints and insinuations, our worthy uncle left us; and we remained

looking at each other with laughing surprise.

“It should seem,” said I, at length, “that Lord Litchmere takes no great pains to conceal his admiration!”

Geraldine made no answer to this observation; but, after a few moments’ silence, informed me, with an air of great satisfaction, that she had just recollected the exact sort of person to invite, upon such short notice, to meet our noble guest. This was a gentleman of the name of Danvers, a middle-aged bachelor, a great sportsman, and a jovial personage, who goes every where, without exciting interest any where.

“Lord Litchmere,” added she, “has dined with him here once or twice before; and, as the weather is now unfavourable for hunting, there is every chance that our invitation may find him at home.”

She ran down to communicate this happy thought to her uncle; and, succeeding upon the present, as she does upon all other occasions, in obtaining his sanction to her wishes, a note was immediately dispatched

to Mr. Danvers, requesting the pleasure of his company to dinner. The messenger brought back a favourable answer, which was sent up to us by Mr. Archer as soon as it arrived.

Whilst dressing for dinner, an operation I am always somewhat dilatory in commencing, Geraldine came into my room, ready to go down; but finding me still unprepared, said she would wait till I was able to accompany her. I perfectly understood this: she was desirous of avoiding every possibility of encountering Lord Litchmere, who was already arrived, *tête-à-tête* in the drawing-room. Forbearing, however, to make any remarks, I concluded my toilet with all the dispatch in my power; and we then descended together.

Her precaution proved by no means superfluous, since we found Lord Litchmere quite alone, and, to judge by his countenance on perceiving the fair object of his devotion, perfectly well disposed to have assailed her with tender and flattering speeches.

Her address to him,—modest, graceful, gentle, and no further tinged with reserve than seemed necessary to repress the too evident rapture with which his heart overflowed, was at once the most elegant, and the best judged, it is possible to imagine. It moderated, without converting into mortification, a joy, which, as she neither participated, nor wished him to think she observed, it required great delicacy imperceptibly to check. By her unconscious and quiet manner, however, she perfectly succeeded in effecting the difficult task ; and, before we had been many minutes in the room, Lord Litchmere had resumed his customary composure ; and looked and spoke with all the sobriety it was reasonable, after so long an absence, to expect.

It gave me pain to observe, that his countenance still bore evident traces of indisposition, and that, except during those moments when conversing with Geraldine, he appeared languid and dispirited. Yet he assured us, that from his accident he now

scarcely experiences the slightest inconvenience.

On the appearance of Clara, whom he had never before seen, and to whom Geraldine introduced him, her beauty seemed to strike him with surprise and admiration; nor can I wonder that such is the effect she almost invariably produces upon strangers. The uncommon brilliancy of her bloom; the delicacy of her features; her extreme youth, when considered in the matronly character; and even the diminutive proportion of her figure, faultless in symmetry, and graceful by nature, at first sight, inspire not only approbation, but the sort of interest that is felt on beholding a very lovely and engaging child. In addition to this, Clara's face is lighted up, on her entrance into company, with an air of vivacity, which the habit of producing an effect gratifying to her vanity can scarcely fail to call forth. She has an aspect for strangers, and another for domestic intercourse; one that peculiarly belongs to her plain morning dress, and another that is taken out with her

trinkets, and evening decorations. But I have uniformly observed, that the very persons who most commend her, speak of, and look at her, with an expression of smiling superiority; with the species of curiosity, mixed with indulgence, which good-natured people experience in watching the attitudes and tricks of a pretty, but half-spoilt favorite. In short, though mentioned in terms of endearment, as a "sweet little creature," "a lovely little creature," &c. I never yet heard any body praise her as a being considered in a rational point of view: no one ever speaks of her conversation, her manners, her countenance, or talents; nor would it, indeed, be easy to speak of things so remote from existence: but all gaze at, and admire her as a curious and pleasing live doll.

The day passed off gravely, though not with absolute dulness. Mr. Danvers had not been expected to add any thing to the general stock of entertainment; and, in that respect, by no means exceeded our slender opinion of his powers. He did very well,

however, to fill up a pause in the conversation ; to drink wine with the ladies at dinner ; to apply to for the wing of a chicken which might chance to stand near him ; or, to laugh a horse-laugh whenever an opportunity offered for such a piece of civility. These sort of folks have their uses in society ; and require so little in return for the little they can give, that, when lazy or out of spirits, I think them preferable to more lively and aspiring characters.

From this time, I fear Lord Litchmere will renew his intercourse here upon his former footing of intimacy. The circumstance will be painful and embarrassing to Geraldine ; who, scrupling to treat him with distance and coldness, yet, apprehensive of encouraging his regard by too much complacency, will scarcely know how to steer securely between the two extremes. I sometimes wish he would now speedily declare himself to Mr. Archer, as, in case of a rejection, he would naturally discontinue his visits. But, should no rejection follow his avowal ; should Mr. Archer, dissatisfied with Ferdi-

nand's apparent backwardness, favour the pretensions of his noble rival; would Geraldine oppose her uncle's recommendation? And if she did not, who could venture to plead for an absent and unacknowledged lover? She will not think herself authorized, I fear, to attend to the suggestions of her own heart; for how can she divest herself of the apprehension that her attachment is unrequited? how account for so many contradictions in his conduct? and, above all, for the unfortunate correspondence so clandestinely held with Mrs. Neville? These are considerations which make me tremble. I long for the development of this most interesting affair, doubly harassing to me, from the necessity I am under of remaining a passive spectator of many perplexities which I could so easily solve. Might I but speak, the hopes I could raise in Ferdinand would, in an instant, bring him to Geraldine's feet; the sight of the verses I yesterday transcribed for you would alone be sufficient to effect it; I could dissipate from *her* mind every doubt of his affection, and make both

parties as happy as their most sanguine well-wishers could desire. But all such interference is prohibited; and I have nothing to do, but to repress my anxiety as well as I am able; patiently to await the tardy operations of time, and devoutly to pray for its prosperous influence.

With these sentiments of compelled resignation, I shall conclude, my dearest Augusta, this long letter.

Adieu, believe me ever,

Yours, affectionately,

JULIA LESMORE.

LETTER III.

THE RIGHT HON. LORD GLENOSWALD, TO FREDERICK
ARCHER, ESQ.

Sir,

Howel Court, Dec. 12.

IT is so long since the intercourse which once subsisted between us has been mutually suspended, that you will perhaps start at sight of the signature of this letter. But the causes that led to this cessation of communication, however unfortunate, were not of a nature to leave upon the minds of either any vestige of personal animosity. I have ever held your character and conduct in the highest estimation, and flatter myself that nothing can have tended to destroy the favourable opinion of mine which you formerly did me the honour to profess. May I then venture to address you upon the footing of a man who, long deprived, by adverse circumstances, of a friend he valued,

is at last enabled to solicit the restoration of the blessing he had lost? Be assured, I have never ceased, amidst the adversities which have oppressed me, to lament, as one of their bitterest aggravations, the necessity there seemed to exist of renouncing your society, and of neglecting to cultivate your regard. I hope this regret has in some degree been reciprocal; though the tenour of your life, serene and prosperous, has probably afforded you too many other sources of happiness, to render the breach of an early friendship, so painful a circumstance to you as it has invariably proved to me. For nearly twenty years, alienated from the world, averse from contracting new, and denied the solace of maintaining former connexions, I have had leisure, and, I fear, but too much inclination, to brood over the disappointments which have multiplied around me. A gleam of hope and consolation now pierces through the heavy cloud that has so long lowered above my head. My inquietudes, if not terminated, are, at least, suspended; and one of the first uses

I make of returning tranquillity, is to claim the renewal of your amity and correspondence.

You have at this time in your neighbourhood, a young nobleman, Lord Litchmere, related not very distantly to my family, who, amongst the few associates with the world we have been willing to admit, has been the most assiduous and friendly. Through him, I have become acquainted with many particulars relative to your mode of life; to the individuals who compose your family; and, above all, to your interesting young ward, which have gratified me in the highest degree, and greatly contributed to increase the concern I have so long experienced at our total estrangement. Lord Litchmere was but imperfectly informed of my son's disastrous story; and therefore spoke with an unguarded frankness in his presence, which I own, at first, made me tremble. Names which for many years had been most industriously avoided; circumstances calculated to awaken remembrances the most grievous; descriptions so minute

that they seemed irresistibly to recall past images to my poor Basil's wounded mind—all these did our unconscious visitor, to my inexpressible alarm, dwell upon with unwearied complacency, and, in reality, consider as subjects which, if not equally delightful to us as to him, must at least be perfectly unobnoxious.

The agitation with which my son first listened to him, it would distress me to relate, and you to hear. Yet the shock, dangerous as it was, proved in the event salutary to his peace. He owned to me, that the particulars related by Lord Litchmere, were precisely such as he had most fervently, though secretly, wished to know: that the names so familiarly uttered before him, however their unexpected mention might for a moment affect him, held imperious and incessant possession of his thoughts; and, that to be at length set free from the self-imposed constraint which had hitherto engaged him to preserve so painful a silence, would afford him the most sensible relief. After this explanation, I ceased to regret the uninten-

tional imprudence of our young guest ; and indulged my son, without opposition or remonstrance, in recurring to past, or expatiating upon present transactions connected with your family. He often, in a cautious and distant manner, insinuated a desire to behold your niece ; alluded to her in all our conversations ; formed conjectures concerning her disposition, countenance, figure ; repeated to himself her name in accents the most mournfully affectionate ; and, in short, attached such exclusive interest to her idea, that it soon predominated over every other ; and his wish of knowing her, originally faint and undetermined, is now become the ruling and insurmountable passion of his mind !

The letters he frequently receives from Lord Litchmere, in which, at his own desire, ample mention never fails to be made of Miss Fauconberg, contribute to augment his solicitude on this head. Be not alarmed, then, at the proposal I am about to make to you ; subscribe to it if you can ; and, on the word of a man of honour, rest impli-

citly assured, that if I thought it connected with the slightest hazard of giving disturbance or alarm to your niece, not even the paternal anxiety I feel to gratify my son, should induce me to attempt it at such a price ! But Basil's noble mind, though not restored to its original vigour and elasticity, has perfectly, and I firmly trust, permanently resumed its sedateness and equanimity. No traces have been left by the direful affliction with which he has been visited, calculated to awaken any emotions but of pity, even in the most timid nature. This being understood, may I venture to solicit from you, and your young relation, the generous indulgence of a visit to this secluded mansion ? We *cannot* come to you ; neither the state of my son's health, nor the depression of his spirits, admit of a possibility of his present re-appearance in the world. Age, infirmities, and a confirmed habit of retirement, equally unfit me for such an enterprise : but you, my dear sir, are still in the vigour of life ; and

accompanied by an object so dear to you as your Geraldine, what place would appear gloomy, or what expedition tedious?

Should no scruples or unforeseen impediment, withhold you from acceding to our wishes, accommodate the shortness or length of your abode with us, to your own inclination and convenience. To know that you purpose coming at all, will afford us such ample gratification, that we shall account it no merit, patiently to wait your own time for the performance of an obligation the highest you could confer upon us.

For the indulgence which I am sensible the purport of this letter requires, I trust to your remembrance of past friendship, and your allowance for a parent's feelings; and have the honour to be, with the sincerest regard and esteem,

Sir,

Your most obedient, humble servant,

GLENOSWALD.

LETTER IV.

MR. ARCHER TO LORD GLENOSWALD.

My Lord,

Highgrove Park,
Dec. 15.

IT is, indeed, true, that the unfortunate occurrences which have for so long a period interrupted the course of our correspondence, and necessitated our separation, “were not of a nature to leave upon the minds of either any vestige of personal animosity;” but it is generous in you, my lord, to make the assertion, and still more generous to feel its justice.

I experienced from the perusal of your lordship’s letter, a mixture of pain and pleasure not easy to define. The placable and liberal spirit that dictated its contents; the flattering regret you condescend to express at the involuntary suspension of our intercourse; and the consolatory assurances you give me of your son’s restoration to tranquillity, could not fail to excite

in me the most lively emotions of gratitude and pleasure. But, my lord, the sight of your hand-writing, the unavoidable recurrence to past events, the affecting allusions to your own melancholy state of mind during a series of such bitter suffering; all these revived in my memory so many mournful recollections, and set before me so forcibly the representation of times and persons for ever departed, that on the day your lordship's letter arrived, I was compelled to seclude myself for many hours, in order to conceal from the friends around me, the anguish that wrung my heart. We have been dreadful scourges to your peace, my lord!—and your toleration of any individual allied to so fatal a race, is little less than heroic; or, to speak more properly, is the result of the purest spirit of unresenting Christianity.

Assuredly, my lord, since you do us the honour to desire it, my niece and I will wait upon you as speedily as the nature of our engagements will permit. But we expect a large party here towards the end

of the month, to spend with us the approaching season of hospitality; and what the length of their stay may be, we are unable to determine. As soon, however, as they leave us at liberty, I will write to your lordship; and whatever time you appoint for our visit, will endeavour most punctually to observe.

But, my lord, you are not aware what a trial you are preparing for Mr. Glenoswald; and I think it my duty to warn you of a circumstance, which may, very probably, cause a material alteration in your views and wishes. My niece bears a singular and very striking resemblance to her ill-advised and unfortunáte mother:—voice, features, countenance, and figure; nay, what is more extraordinary still, considering that, when deprived of this hapless parent, she was scarcely more than a year old, her very manners, and many of her looks and gestures, are so wonderfully similar, that I am often startled at the unaccountable conformity, and ready to delude myself with the idea, that the sister I so prematurely

lost, and so deeply lamented, is miraculously restored to my wishes. If such is the effect her presence produces upon me, accustomed as I am daily to behold her, think, my lord, what might be its influence upon Mr. Glenoswald!—Weigh well, I beseech you, the importance of this consideration; and be it not, a second time, the fate of any of my family, to bring sorrow and disturbance into yours.

Geraldine is wholly ignorant of her mother's history. Whether my silence on this head merits praise or censure, it is not for me to determine. Hitherto I have had no reason to regret the system upon which I have acted; and every day, as it places former transactions in a more remote point of view, diminishes, I hope, the danger of her being accidentally surprised and distressed by any officious informant. Whilst she was a child, I thought such a tale calculated only to disquiet her imagination, exalt her opinion of the powerful influence of the passions, and bewilder her understanding between the opposite sentiments.

of reverence for her departed mother, *as* her mother, and condemnation of her, as a weak and too pliant woman. These would have been strange and pernicious contrarieties to have set afloat in a youthful mind, where all distinctions between right and wrong ought to be kept as clear as possible : since, it is scarcely to be expected that a child should reason so justly, as to separate the error from the erring person ; and, when recommended to consider the latter with indulgence, should know how to preserve a proper sense of the disapprobation due to the former. The chief characteristics I have desired for my niece, have been, accuracy of judgement, and strength of principle sufficient to enable her to act up with steadiness to whatever she deemed, upon mature reflection, most honourable and upright. Her opportunities of proving that she really possesses these qualifications, have hitherto been confined to such trifling transactions, as render it almost presumptuous to aver that she *does* possess them : but from the long study I have made of her dis-

position, I am inclined to believe it fraught with all the firmness I could desire. The fatal mischiefs that resulted from her poor mother's deficiency in resolution, long since convinced me, to my sorrow, that without this essential virtue, no character is to be depended upon. That unhappy young creature had every other good quality which the most rigid moralist could require; she was sincere, benevolent, modest, and affectionate: but such was her timid nature, that, alas! even from her given faith, her most solemn promises, she could be turned by a look of authority, or a threat of displeasure! May this, I earnestly pray, be a weakness ever far from the character of her lovely descendant! Though easy and compliant in the ordinary affairs of life, may she, on all important occasions, evince the most unyielding—let me even say, inflexible determination, to be guided by her own conscientious sense of what is just and equitable!

Pardon, my lord, the prolixity with which I have dwelt upon this subject. I never

know how to be concise when Geraldine is my theme. She is the deserving darling of my affections; the pride, hope, and comfort of my life! Prosperity has had no power to weaken the tenderness of her heart; indulgence has tempted her to no encroachments; praise has left uninjured her native humility; nor has the facility she finds in obtaining every boon, taught her to multiply her wants, to disregard the feelings of others, or, in caprice and folly, to lose the love of simple pleasures, the hilarity and contentment so well adapted to her age.

But now, my lord, it is time to close this letter, the unnecessary length of which, your lordship will perhaps pardon, when you reflect, that it is the first I have had the happiness of addressing to you for a space of more than twenty years.

I have the honour to be, with the highest respect and veneration, your lordship's obliged and very humble servant,

FREDERIC ARCHER.

LETTER V.

MISS LESMORE TO MRS. LUMLEY.

Highgrove Park,
Dec. 17.

My dear Augusta,

AFTER a silence somewhat longer than usual, the arrival, this day, of some of our expected Christmas guests, tempts me again to take up the pen. You may remember that I never promised to write when I had nothing to say; and really, since the departure of Ferdinand, such has, almost uniformly, been my case. We have walked and rode, read and talked, breakfasted, dined, and drank tea, with so little variety of plan, purpose, or company, that it would have been nearly impossible to have related of the day that was present, any thing that had not been recorded of the day that was passed. I have already observed, these quiet, unmarked hours, though of use in soothing the mind, and making the person grow sleek, will not admit of being dressed out in the pomp of

narration. I therefore make it a rule to let them alone ; and to suspend all epistolary correspondence, till times more fertile either in anecdote or business.

The visitors I mentioned, are Davenant, the two Mr. Dudleys, and a delightful old General Wilmington ; with his son and daughter. The three former, tired of themselves, an infirmity to which the rich and the idle are accused of being a little subject, chose to set out before either my mother or Caroline were prepared to undertake the journey ; and, for no possible reason that we can divine, posted hither full speed, and landed their bustling persons in the hall, just as we were crossing it to go up stairs and dress for dinner. I laughed heartily at their unmeaning hurry, and still more at the ridiculous contents of their chaise. Dudley senior, whom we saw so mad last year about painting, and who, the year preceding, was equally enthusiastic in the pursuit of chemistry, has, this winter, resumed, with more fondness than ever, his early passion for music. In consequence

of this revived mania, the vehicle which conveyed him and his two substantial fellow travellers to Highgrove Park, besides an abundance of other luggage, was stuffed full of solos, concertos, duets, quartets, and trios, in addition to an ample violin case, which his brother assured me, had so cruelly cramped their legs, that both he and Davenant had, mentally, sent it to the d—— a thousand times. What rendered the matter more ludicrous was, that their servants, who arrived in a hack-chaise about the same time they did themselves, had scarcely any baggage at all with them, and could have admitted and cherished the violin case with all imaginable ease and security. But its owner feared to intrust so precious a deposit to their care; and, therefore, not only submitted to the misery of travelling, nose and chin together himself, but imposed the same penance upon his luckless companions.

General Wilmington did not make his appearance till we had nearly dined, in consequence of some accident which be-

fel one of his post horses, and retarded him on the road. He was received by Mr. Archer with the most zealous and cordial welcome. A long and intimate friendship has subsisted between them; and it would be difficult to decide which of the two seemed most gratified at sight of the other.

Miss Wilmington, a pleasing and well-bred girl, promises to be an agreeable acquisition to our party. Her brother is a tall, shy boy, tolerably handsome, however, and appears perfectly good-humoured. Clara, is delighted at the arrival of such a reinforcement. She has been of late, perhaps in consequence of the want of amusement she found here, more petulant and provoking than ever I have known her. Now the novelty is worn off, she ceases to derive any pleasure from those childish and noisy romps with her husband, which, when she first came, caused me such ridiculous annoyance. Without pursuit, without aim or object, her life has appeared a real bur-

then to her ; and so terribly out of humour has she been with herself and all around her, that it was scarcely possible to say or do any thing that would please her. Madame de St. Hermine beheld all this with sorrowing surprise ; Albert bore it with exemplary patience, yet looked thoughtful and unhappy ; Mr. Archer viewed it with a mixture of contempt and indignation ; Geraldine preserved a determined neutrality, unless the hope of being able to conciliate any of their ruffled tempers, induced her cautiously to interfere ; and as for myself, more insensible than, in the true spirit of Christian charity, perhaps, I ought to be, to every thing relating to this tormenting trifler, I endeavoured to think of, and attend to, her as little as possible ; quietly pursuing my own occupations, and avoiding all occasions of being witness to her impertinence.

But I think I have made a discovery, which, if her husband had resolution to profit from, and I had the courage to communicate to him, might be the means of

reversing the whole face of affairs, and of putting them upon an entirely new and far better footing. Clara, with all her blustering, is, in reality, a prodigious coward; and whoever would take the trouble, perseveringly and systematically to control her, would find her composed of much more malleable materials, than has been hitherto supposed.

Having by chance espied, a few days ago, amongst Geraldine's unframed miniatures, the picture which I have often mentioned of Colonel Courtville, she rapturously seized it, saying it was the most beautiful thing she had ever beheld, and protesting, that nothing should ever induce her to part with it! Geraldine stared with unfeigned surprise at this extraordinary declaration; but treating it, at first, as a jest, she forbore any earnestness of solicitation for its restoration, contenting herself with saying,—

“When your admiration, my dear Clara, has had leisure to subside, I shall expect to find the picture deposited in its usual place:

observe that I leave this drawer unlocked for that purpose."

Clara laughed; and, turning upon her heel, ran off with her prize.

Whether by accident or design, it so happened, that, in the course of the following day, she suffered her husband to obtain a sight of this picture, the very existence of which was before wholly unsuspected by him. He inquired, with great astonishment, how it came into her possession: but, refusing to give him any satisfactory answer, she seemed disposed to let him torment himself with whatever conjectures he chose. Albert, ignorant that we were at all acquainted with the transaction, concealed his uneasiness as well as he could, yet exerted every means in his power to induce his ungenerous little mate, to explain to him how it was possible such a portrait could have fallen into her hands. She persisted in refusing to dispel his anxiety, and, at last, sought refuge from his importunity in the room where Geraldine and I were sitting.

“Albert,” cried she, throwing herself upon a chair, breathless with running, “persecutes me to death about the colonel’s miniature. He surprised me with it in my hand this morning, and has never ceased plaguing himself and me about it ever since.”

“I hope then,” said Geraldine, “you have brought it back, to put an end to so foolish a cause of dissension.”

“Indeed I have not; and the more he teases me, the more determined I am to keep it.”

Geraldine now began to look a little grave, and said.

“But, Clara, I give you no authority to detain it; and since its being any longer in your custody is disagreeable to Monsieur de St. Hermine, I must really insist upon its being restored immediately.”

“Disagreeable to Monsieur de St. Hermine!” repeated Clara disdainfully; “and do you imagine, Miss Fauconberg, that I shall give up any innocent gratification, be-

cause it may happen to be *disagreeable* to Monsieur de St. Hermine?"

"I imagine, at least," said Geraldine, calmly, "that you ought."

"Then, I assure you, ma'am, we differ very widely in opinion! And, however you may *insist* upon my doing what you think proper, or however you may conceive I *ought* to be my husband's slave, you will find I have a spirit both to resist his tyranny, and your unsolicited advice!"

"But, I hope," said I, laughing, "we shall not find you have the spirit to insist upon a quarrel?"

"I have nothing at all to say to you, Miss Lesmore, upon the subject, and shall be exceedingly obliged to you not to interfere. As for Miss Fauconberg, she may rest assured I shall not return the picture till I please; and if it is so very valuable to her that she cannot bear it out of her sight, let her paint another,—the original, I dare say, will not refuse to sit to her again!"

The rude tone of voice in which this was

uttered, and the impertinent insinuation it conveyed, exasperated me so much, that I should probably have addressed some very severe reprimand to the provoking little personage from whom it proceeded, had I not, at that moment, perceived Mr. Archer standing near the door, and regarding her with the most evident and even stern displeasure.

“ I must beg to know, madam,” said he, at last, “ upon what subject you are taking the liberty of addressing the mistress of this house with such unbecoming asperity ? and why it is, you venture into an apartment appropriated to her own peaceful occupations, with a countenance so inflamed, and in a disposition of mind that renders you so unfit for her society ? ”

Never had I heard Mr. Archer interrogate any one with such austerity and haughtiness ; but an offence committed against Geraldine, was, of all others, what he could least brook ; and had Clara studied how to render herself most obnoxious to him, she could not better have succeeded.

Completely subdued by the appearance of anger in his aspect, and unable, articulately, to utter a single sentence, she stood before him panic-struck and confounded; and, after surveying her for some moments with silent scorn, Mr. Archer turned to me,—

“ I must hear from you, my dear Julia,” said he, “ the reason of this unpleasant scene; and I desire to hear it without any palliation.”

Before I had time to speak, the ever-indulgent Geraldine interfered. She saw poor Clara trembling with terror lest, thus called upon, I should detail the whole affair; and, incapable of exposing her to any additional mortification, she hastily said,—

“ Clara, we must be friends again; my uncle wishes for no more, he will ask for no more: let us shake hands, and grant me the little favour I solicited.”

Clara understood her; and, enchanted at the reprieve, flew to fetch the picture, assured that, in such hands, her cause during this temporary absence would be safe.

Mr. Archer, when she was gone, stepped up to Geraldine, kissed her cheek, and recovering his usual serenity of countenance, said,—

“ I will carry my interference no further—you seem not disposed to aggravate her disgrace ; and I trust this little specimen of my talents in the art of *bouncing*, will have the good effect of contributing to moderate the display of hers.”

“ A great deal,” said I, “ might be done towards her reformation, if, occasionally, her husband knew how to give some of these specimens.”

“ The danger is,” said Geraldine, “ that a husband rendered conscious of the efficacy of such means, would have recourse to them too unsparingly: and if a married couple live upon such terms, that there must be oppression on one side or the other, it is not, perhaps, very unfair, to wish the evil may rather fall upon the husband than the wife, as being so much the best able to fly from, or, at least, to moderate and control it.”

Clara, now, with a penitential look, rejoined us, bearing in her hand the contested picture, carefully wrapt in silver paper, lest Mr. Archer should obtain a peep at it. Geraldine received it with a smile of reconciliation, and immediately locked it up in her painting desk.

Since this wholesome little lesson, it is scarcely credible how meek and gentle Clara is become. She has always been afraid of Mr. Archer; you will therefore easily believe that the guard she now puts upon her temper, in his presence, is doubly strict. To Geraldine, likewise, her behaviour is wholly different; though she could not entirely refrain, the first time they were left *tête-à-tête* after the dressing-room scene, from throwing out some unpleasant insinuations, implying a suspicion of her attachment to Colonel Courtville, in consequence of the *monstrous fuss*, as she called it, which had been made about his picture.

“My dear Clara,” said Geraldine, “I set so little value upon his likeness, that I should not scruple throwing it upon the

back of the fire, had I not a better method of disposing of it; I mean to give it to his sister, who, without considering that he is a simpleton, and much inclined to be a coxcomb, loves him so affectionately, that it will afford her very great pleasure."

"And why did you not give it to her sooner?"

"I have intended it often, and always forgotten it when we have met."

Many other questions followed these, which Geraldine answered with her accustomed patience; and Clara at length retired tolerably satisfied.



Dec. 18.

WHOEVER might join our present party, without some previous knowledge of the individuals who compose it, would be very apt to mistake us for a company of musical professors. Mr. Dudley granted no rest to his violin last night, even after its recent journey, but sent for it down as soon as tea was over—persuaded Geraldine to take her

station at the piano-forte, and, regardless who listened, or who liked it, made her play to his accompaniment above two hours. He afterwards pressed Miss Wilmington to perform; but could not prevail on her to comply. Clara knows nothing of music; and I have so often laughed at his whimsical volatility of pursuits, that he thinks it hopeless ever to attempt enlisting me into his service, and forbears hazarding a refusal. Driven, therefore, to despair, he marched off to his own room, with the violin upon his shoulder, playing the whole way up the loudly-resounding stone stairs; and when we passed his chamber door between twelve and one o'clock, we heard him still indefatigably at work. To-day, the case has not been very different. He has been, what Davenant unceremoniously calls, *fiddling*, ever since eight o'clock, the short respite he allowed himself for breakfast, alone excepted. We are all tired to death of the sound of his instrument, which unfortunately is so powerful, that it forces its way to the remotest parts of the house: but this

he either does not suspect, or utterly disregards: and every one amongst us who ever learnt a note of music, has been alternately compelled to play or sing to his accompaniment, with the diligence and attention of scholars performing to a strict master. The rest of the gentlemen have been out riding or walking: but he has favoured us with his company the whole day; so much to my annoyance, that had I not been induced to stay, with a view of occasionally relieving Geraldine from his incessant importunity, I believe I should have accepted Mr. Archer's offer, and sallied forth on a long, cold, and dirty ramble with him and General Wilmington.



Dec. 19.

OUR sagacious brother-in-law, my dear Augusta, has just been communicating to me, with a face of great importance, a most marvellous discovery which he fancies he has made.

“ Julia,” cried he, drawing me towards a

window before I had quite finished my breakfast, "do you observe nothing extraordinary in the looks of Arthur Dudley?"

"Nothing half so extraordinary," answered I, laughing, "as your own air of solemnity at this very moment! What have you taken into your head, my dear friend? I am afraid your intelligence will fall very short of the expectations you are endeavouring to raise."

"Upon my honour, I don't believe you will long think so! What would you say were any one to tell you, Arthur Dudley is in love with Miss Fauconberg?"

"I should probably say, that an attachment so promptly conceived, was likely to be as promptly extinguished. He never saw her till the day before yesterday."

"Very true: but for all that, he is in love, or in great danger of becoming most desperately so, unless something is done to check the progress of his admiration."

"To attempt that, my dear Mr. Davenant, is neither your business nor mine; so leave him and his love to their fate."

“ Ah, Julia! what an inconceivable little dissembler you are! But,” added he, holding me fast by the arm, to prevent my retreat, “ you know the family views with regard to Miss Fauconberg and your brother; and therefore must allow, it would be exceedingly unfair to let poor Arthur entangle himself in a passion likely to prove so unprosperous. I think some hint of the matter ought to be given him; and, in your heart, so, I am sure, do you, though you affect such provoking indifference.”

“ I affect nothing,” said I, “ not even the incredulity with which I have listened to the whole of your unproved information.”

“ You are enough to overcome the patience of a saint! But take care, Julia, I may be tempted (to preserve the peace of this poor young man, who, I am certain, is prodigiously struck with the beauty of Geraldine), may be tempted not only to inform him of the engagement we all wish her to enter into but, likewise, of the secret good

opinion entertained of him by a certain friend of hers!"


I own this threat was by no means pleasant, and I felt the blood rush into my cheeks at the mere suggestion: but disguising my vexation better even than was necessary to conceal it from the observation of Davenant, I coolly, answered,—

"You are perfectly welcome, my dear brother, to give him whatever information concerning the friend of Geraldine you please; only suffer me, in my turn, to hint, that when you have condescended to disseminate such idle and false intelligence, it will be in my power to place you in so ridiculous a point of view, that you will vainly wish you had rather lost the faculty of speech, than made of it such impolitic use!"

This was enough most effectually to impose silence upon him. The word *ridiculous* scared him as much as if he had beheld a supernatural apparition; or, perhaps from an intuitive though acknow-

ledged consciousness, of the proneness with which he is apt to render himself obnoxious to derision, it is a weapon which, of all others, he most dreads and execrates.

You will not be surprised, however, that after so positive an assertion of the effect produced upon Arthur Dudley by the attractions of Geraldine, I should experience some anxiety to observe his conduct towards her. Yet, I am by no means indifferent concerning the motives to which you may choose to attribute this curiosity; and most seriously beg you to believe, that they are very far from being of a nature deservedly to call forth your raillery.



I every minute wonder more and more what poor Davenant could possibly mean by gravely reporting to me such unfounded conjectures. I can descry no symptoms of the infant passion he pretends to have perceived. It is true, Arthur Dudley speaks in the highest terms of the elegance and sweetness of Geraldine's manners, and avails him-

self with alacrity of every opportunity of conversing with her; but further, I observe nothing which proves his being, what Davenant terms, so “prodigiously struck.”—Every man of taste and feeling, capable of estimating sense, talents, and beauty, must be struck, more or less, by the peculiar assemblage of all these, so remarkable in our friend; indeed, it would scarcely be possible to avoid entertaining a mean opinion, either of the heart or discernment of any one who remained wholly insensible to their influence: but simply to do her justice, is no proof of being absolutely enamoured of her. Enough, however, upon the subject: you care not whether Arthur has lost his heart or preserved it; and, to say the truth, I know not very well why I should.

Miss Wilmington has won the favour of the whole party, by the dexterity with which she has contrived to relieve us from the perpetual sound of the elder Dudley’s violin. She persuaded him this morning, that her brother has always been extremely desirous of learning to play upon his favour-

ite instrument; but, that having received very little encouragement from the General, the poor lad never ventured to apply much to it.—

“He knows something of the matter, however,” continued she; “and if you, Mr. Dudley, would have the kindness to give him, privately, a little assistance, it would make him the happiest and the most grateful creature in the world!”

Dudley, who really is extremely good-natured, readily acceded to this plan; his youthful scholar-elect was immediately called, and, I imagine, well tutored on the way by his arch sister: a crazy old fiddle, which usually hangs up in the servants' hall, was sent for, and away the musical pair triumphantly marched to Dudley's apartment! We saw no more of them till dinner; but heard the discordant scrapings of the new votary of Apollo, every time we went near that side of the house where he was exercising his budding talents.

Dec. 21.

My mother and Caroline arrived yesterday morning, bringing with them little Charles, more engaging and more lovely than ever. He is the idol of the whole house, and might, perhaps, from the extraordinary encouragement he receives, become extremely troublesome, were it not for a certain spirit of independence, which renders too much attention, confinement, or coaxing, intolerably irksome to him. He likes to wander about at his own pleasure, to choose his own amusements, and even his own associates; and where he thinks his presence undesired, or where he feels no inclination to remain, scarcely any temptation has power to detain him. He asks me perpetually where his uncle Lesmore is? when he will come again? and why he went away? Fortunately, the answers I am obliged to make to these interrogations, require not, with him, to be very accurate or circumstantial; I therefore easily satisfy him, at least, for a time; and when he returns to the charge, I put the same replies

into different words, and they produce nearly the same effect. In default of my brother, Arthur Dudley appears to be the child's principal favourite, and certainly, within doors, has no rival : but when out, walking, the negro, Cæsar, and his faithful friend Pompey, are admitted to more than an equal participation of his regard.

Lord Litchmere and Colonel Courtville were here this evening. Neither my mother nor Caroline could regard the former without some degree of distrust; and, whenever he addressed himself to Geraldine, looked uneasy. She herself evidently endures the most painful struggle between her wish of repressing his assiduities, and her unwillingness to afflict or offend him. She cannot bear the appearance of openly shunning his conversation; yet, if a favourable opportunity for so doing offers itself without apparent design and premeditation, nothing can exceed the skill and dexterity with which she knows how to seize it.

In the course of the evening, at whose suggestion I know not, a dance was formed

by the younger part of the company, and Geraldine, less disposed than usual to join in it, seated herself at the piano-forte, and undertook the laborious task of playing such airs as we called for. This arrangement, it did not immediately occur to her, was the best calculated to suit Lord Litchmere's constant wish of conversing with her apart, that could be devised. Long pauses in her performance necessarily intervened while we were settling the figure we should dance, and the tune we should choose; and his lordship, stationed close beside her, availed himself with eagerness of the facility these interruptions gave him for speaking to her unheard by the rest of the party. Embarrassed and distressed by such persevering attention, and perhaps, also, by the subject he chose, Geraldine, perceiving that Mr. Dudley, in preference to dancing, seemed rejoiced to seize any pretext for drawing forth his violin, and was preparing to play with her, beckoned me to the instrument, and said in a low voice,—

“ As Mr. Dudley volunteers his services,

and, I really believe, wishes to perform, I feel half tempted to resign my station, and stand up amongst the dancers. Are all the gentlemen engaged?"

"Whether they are or not," answered I, with a smile, "the moment it is known you want a partner, there is not one of them would make the smallest scruple of offering himself to your acceptance."

"Such an impertinent proof of distinction is out of the question; but, my dear Julia, try what you can procure for me in an equitable way: any body will do, young Wilmington, or Mr. Davenant."

I promised to assist her in the best manner I could, and turned away, somewhat perplexed how to acquit myself of the undertaking. It was literally true, that the few dancing men present, had already made their selection; and as it appeared to me that I could have no right to interfere with the property of others, I determined to give up my own. Approaching Arthur Dudley, therefore, to whom I had, but a few minutes before, engaged myself,—

“Prepare,” said I, “for a tremendous trial of fortitude, and know, that it is determined you are to dance with another lady.”

“Fortunately,” answered he, smiling, “the threat cannot be very easily fulfilled, since there is no other lady present with whom I *can* dance, unless, indeed, you send me to your mother.”

“If you are refractory, I shall send you, perhaps, to my grandmother! But come, you must obey my decrees, and follow me with a good grace.”

He looked a little irresolute, and appeared disposed to hang back; upon which, taking him by the arm, I conducted him to the place where Geraldine was still sitting.

“I have brought you, my dear girl,” said I, “a gentleman who humbly and earnestly aspires to the honour of becoming your partner; pray accept him, and go and assist those tedious souls in settling what dance they shall begin.”

“But who, then,” cried Geraldine, “shall you stand up with?”

“I shall get my harp, and occasionally

play a little to relieve poor Mr. Dudley, and, at intervals, have the pleasure of flirting with Lord Litchmere."

His lordship forced a smile, and thanked me for the honour I intended him ; and Geraldine, though distressed at the idea of depriving me of my partner, seeing no other way of escaping from the undivided attentions of her noble lover, whispered to me her acknowledgements, and hastened away.

Now, shall I be honest enough to destroy, by a needless confession, the whole merit of my conduct throughout this little transaction? Shall I own that I was not entirely instigated by the desire of rendering a slight service to Geraldine, but, in some measure, impelled by an urgent wish of observing how Arthur Dudley would be affected by the transfer? Very childish, you will say, and so, I allow, it was ; but Davenant, in despite of myself, had excited suspicions in my mind which I was by no means sorry to seize so fair an opportunity of confirming or repelling.

“ And what,” you ask, “ was the result of your observations ? ”

Why, a firm persuasion that our brother-in-law, for once in his life, if not quite correct in his conjectures, was, at least, so very near the reality, that had the spirit of divination been upon him, he could scarcely have made a more oracular report. Arthur Dudley, the moment he discovered who was the partner I destined for him, not only ceased to evince any reluctance to forsake me, but betrayed, in the most perceptible manner, the pleasure it gave him to profit by such an exchange. He left me without uttering a syllable expressive of regret, without even looking towards me, and as he led Geraldine across the room, seemed almost to wear an air of triumph.

Lord Litchmere, disappointed, and very little pleased by an arrangement so hostile to his wishes, sunk into silence, and scarcely raised his head for the rest of the evening. I scrupulously forbore to disturb his meditations ; Dudley continued to labour indefatigably at the violin with an air of perfect

satisfaction ; and, now and then, by way of doing something, I struck a few chords upon the harp.

When the first dance was over, Davenant, who had been engaged in it, came up to me, and glancing his eyes towards Geraldine and her partner, he said, in his usual bustling manner,—

“ Why, Julia, what in the world could induce you to set those two people dancing together? Have you a mind to ruin, at once, both your brother’s chance and your own?”

I was not in a very good humour, and this blunt speech tended but little to sooth me. I therefore answered him, I fear, somewhat peevishly, and he went away laughing, and exclaiming,—

“ Ah, poor Julia! poor Julia!”

Caroline, overhearing the provoking wretch, stopped him to inquire what he meant; and glad to gain an auditor, he took her on one side, and, with much gesticulation and vehemence, communicated to her all

his surmises, and the conclusions he chose to draw from them.

When this conference, which I did not choose to interrupt, much as its suspected purpose annoyed me, was ended, Caroline came towards me.

“However you may affect,” said she, in a low voice, “to discredit Davenant’s assertions of the growing attachment of Arthur Dudley for Geraldine, nothing can be more apparent. It would be using him ill to foster it by affording him opportunities of paying his court to her; and I really think you were to blame, my dear Julia, for contriving to engage them together.”

The seriousness with which she spoke, I own, surprised and startled me; however, I explained to her the reasons by which I had been actuated, and she then expressively said,—

“So then, to release Geraldine from the importunate assiduities of one lover, you purposely throw her in the way of another? Nothing could be more kindly planned for our poor Ferdinand!”

Tried to the very "top of my bent," and not in as good spirits as usual, I felt almost overpowered by these reproaches, unaccompanied as they were with any thing like severity. Caroline saw that I could bear no more, and, pressing my hand, silently left me.

How the matter was arranged I know not, but in a few minutes the engagement between Arthur Dudley and his fair partner was dissolved; she stood up for the second dance with Colonel Courtville, and the discarded swain found his way to the corner where I sat.

"Miss Lesmore," said he, "I come to surrender myself again to your direction. What use shall I make of the liberty to which I am restored? Is it your pleasure to let me devote it to your own service? or must I go in quest of the *grandmother* with whom you threatened me, and yield it up to her?"

"At my suggestion, neither one nor the other," replied I, forcing myself to speak with cheerfulness; "liberty is too precious

to be twice parted with at the bidding of another. I renounce all pretension, therefore, to the further disposal of yours."

"This is a house," cried he, "in which every man must find his liberty endangered; and I am far from meaning to boast too presumptuously of the preservation of my own."

"It is fortunate, then," said I, "that I accepted not the power with which you appeared, a moment since, inclined to invest me. I thought you came as a free man, to tender to me the disposal of your actions; and now, I find you a contented slave, half prepared even to exult in your subjection."

"Come, come," resumed he, with a look of some consciousness, "do not let us entangle ourselves in too many flowers of rhetoric: allow me rather, in 'plain, unvarnished' terms, to request you will do me the honour of dancing with me."

I own, a most vehement inclination to refuse him, assailed me; but not knowing

upon what plausible pretext, I silently suffered him to take my hand, and he led me towards the dancers.

I am this moment interrupted by Caroline, who brings me up a letter Mr. Archer has just received from Ferdinand. I transcribe a part of it for your perusal. It is dated from Mr. Melwyn's.

“The hospitality and kindness with
 “which, at my departure, you condescend-
 “ed, dear sir, to encourage me speedily to
 “renew my visit, I have neither ungrate-
 “fully forgotten, nor shall I be so much my
 “own enemy as to neglect profiting by. I
 “am ashamed, however, to add, that it is
 “not at present in my power to fix any day
 “for leaving this place: Mr. Melwyn makes
 “such a point of detaining me, in company
 “with several others, old college associ-
 “ates, till after the 25th, that I want reso-
 “lution to withstand his importunity. But,
 “I flatter myself, your party will not imme-
 “diately break up, and that I shall yet ob-
 “tain my release in time to be able to join
 “the friends who, towards the end of the

“ month, may still have the happiness of
 “ being assembled at Highgrove Park.”

All that precedes and follows this paragraph, is dry, matter-of-fact stuff, such as men in general write, and such as many men pride themselves upon writing (as if there was any such marvellous merit in being dull !)

But I have extracted quite enough to give you a complete idea of the purport of the whole epistle, since there can be no doubt that it was solely penned with a view of introducing the lines you have been reading ; which, put into plain English, would signify neither more nor less than this :—“ I do not
 “ like to offend you, my good friend ; but
 “ the truth is, I have no design, at present,
 “ to visit Highgrove Park at all. I there-
 “ fore write this, as a preparation for the
 “ total breach of our engagement.”

This is the light in which Caroline also considers the hopeful paragraph ; and it has filled us both with consternation. She says Mr. Archer handed the letter to her, after reading it himself, without making upon it a single comment : but his looks showed

him very little pleased.—Good Heaven! is Ferdinand mad? Why trifle away his own chance of happiness? Why, if he dreads a rival, proudly keep aloof from every possibility of rendering himself more acceptable than that rival? What is his absence to do for him? My fear is, that it will do this—blot him entirely from Geraldine's memory; who, though she may not immediately learn to prefer another, will, at least, be allowed time to overcome every shadow of partiality for him. Can it be, that Mrs. Neville is at the bottom of all this? Oh, those letters, those letters!



I cannot discover whether Geraldine is apprised of the contents of Ferdinand's letter. She has never mentioned, but, I suspect, she has seen it. Madame de St. Hermine, I know, has; and avows, what I thought she never could experience against her old favourite, very high indignation at such ill-timed perverseness. Mr. Archer,

she says, is yet more incensed, and were Lesmore now to come amongst us, I almost question whether he would be a welcome guest. Sometimes I feel strongly tempted to write to him: but what could I say that I have not urged already? Lord Litchmere's vicinity is the origin of all the mischief; and I have neither power to discard him myself, nor to cause his banishment by others.

Adieu, my dearest Augusta. Caroline tells me she shall write to you to-morrow. If I am silent for some days, attribute it to my knowledge that you have now another correspondent from hence.—Adieu.

Yours, most affectionately,

JULIA LESMORE.

LETTER VI.

MRS. DAVENANT TO MRS. LUMLEY.

Highgrove Park,
Dec. 22.

Dear Augusta,

NEVER was a more extraordinary game of cross-purposes played by any set of individuals, than is now performing by those connected with this mansion. I know not whether poor Julia has betrayed herself in her letters to you, but the fact is, she is as deeply concerned in this *imbroglio* as any of the party. The predicament in which Geraldine stands, is well known to you; Lord Litchmere still cherishes his hopeless passion: Clara, wishing to excite attention, or, perhaps; a little captivated, seizes every occasion of distinguishing Colonel Courtville; and Arthur Dudley, who, whilst a visitor at our house, talked perpetually of Julia, and on his first arrival here, paid her, I am told, the most marked attention, is ra-

pidly destroying his own peace of mind, by nourishing a fruitless and dangerous admiration for Geraldine. Albert, doatingly fond of his beautiful little torment, is devoured with chagrin at her unconcealed preference of another; and Ferdinand, though absent, is probably enduring the utmost inquietude himself, and exciting a mixture of sorrow and resentment in those who best love him, and are most anxious for his happiness. What a picture!—Yet, believe me, it is a faithful one; nor have I yet said all, since I have omitted to explain to you the share that belongs to our dear Julia in this scene of perplexity.

We have always agreed, that, warm and affectionate as is her excellent heart towards her family and friends, she is not of a disposition easily to imbibe a romantic passion; but she is, undoubtedly, capable of conceiving a rational attachment for an agreeable and deserving man; and such an attachment, I am persuaded, has been quietly lurking in her breast from the moment her acquaintance with Arthur Dudley, I will not say

began, but was securely confirmed by a residence together at my house last Christmas. In the course of the following spring, she met him frequently in town, and every interview appeared to heighten the favourable impression each entertained of the other. Arthur, though a younger brother, is not destitute of fortune; his manners are peculiarly pleasing; his character extremely fair; and his temper, cheerful, mild, and liberal. Such a match therefore, considered in every point of view, could not but have been highly gratifying to her whole family: and my worthy *sposo*, in particular, had quite set his friendly heart upon it. But who shall venture to form plans for the destiny of another? In the height of our most sanguine expectations, forth steps Geraldine, thoughtless of mischief, but the undoubted cause of a total change in the young man's sentiments and views; of his gradual estrangement from Julia, and of the melancholy downfall of all the castles in the air we had so prematurely permitted ourselves to erect.

Now, my dear Augusta, you who know me to be the most indolent of human beings, as far, at least, as relates to the affairs of others, what will you say when told, that *I* mean to be the great magician who shall emancipate the spell-bound Arthur; dissolve the fascination that misleads his fancy, and restore him, half penitent and half rejoiced, to his ancient fealty, and his slighted mistress? Ferdinand and Geraldine are left to struggle by themselves through the needless difficulties of their situation; a mode of proceeding on the part of their friends, which threatens the entire destruction of their future happiness. Julia shall not, in a similar manner, run the hazard of forfeiting her fairest prospects; and if I do not, in less than two days, restore all things to their original order, and obtain justice, and an *amende honorable* for my injured sister, call me the clumsiest dabbler in the black art that ever yet ventured to set up for a conjuror!



I have begun my operations, Augusta,

befriended by so fair and tempting an opportunity, that it was impossible, considering the meditations afloat in my brain, to forbear coming to immediate action.

Arthur Dudley has several times, since our arrival here, uttered expressions in my hearing, so unguardedly animated in praise of Geraldine, and, indeed, availed himself so eagerly of every occasion to make her the subject of conversation, that I thought, at last, I might, without indiscretion, permit myself to utter some little animadversion upon the circumstance. To-day, therefore, happening to be in the drawing-room with him, just before dinner, when only Madame de St. Hermine and Davenant were present, I interrupted him in the midst of one of these flourishing encomiums, and said, with a smile,—

“ I have heard, Mr. Dudley, that there are various ways of falling in love; some *look* themselves into the tender passion; some *listen*, and some *talk* themselves into it. Now, I am terribly afraid this last case will be yours, for, if encouraged, you would

talk of Miss Fauconberg from peep of dawn to setting sun: and, really, as you do it so eloquently, it is almost a pity to stop you: but, as a friend, you must forgive my cautioning you to beware, how you bestow your heart upon one, who, I am not without suspicion, has lost the power of giving you her own in return!"


The hint was understood; and never did I behold in any countenance, embarrassment, surprise, and mortification more palpably impressed. Forbearing, however, to add any thing to the ingredients of so bitter a potion, I turned from him when I had ceased speaking, with as unconcerned an aspect as I could assume, and begun some common-place conversation with Madame de St. Hermine. Davenant comprehended by a glance from my eye, that he was requested to abstain from all raillery or interference; and thus, without lessening its effect by useless additions, I left my young man to chew at leisure upon the cud I had administered.

It is utterly impossible to do justice to

the conduct of Julia towards Geraldine throughout this trying business. Not for a moment has she shown the slightest degree of resentment or pique. Convinced that her friend was wholly innocent of any design to supplant her; persuaded, even, that she was scarcely aware of the sentiments she had inspired, and would have shrunk, disgusted, from every idea of giving them encouragement; Julia has invariably and candidly done her justice; attributed the change in her *quondam* lover to his own mutability of temper, joined to the superior attractions of Geraldine—secretly lamented the former, and generously pardoned the latter.

But, to return from this digression. Anxiously, yet guardedly, I watched Arthur's looks and proceedings throughout the remainder of the day, and observed nothing which was not calculated to make me rejoice in the step I had so boldly taken. His conversation was perplexed, his answers vague and little to the purpose, his eye full of new-raised doubt and appre-

hension, and his general demeanour listless and depressed. Barbarously exulting in these symptoms, I was inaccessible either to remorse or pity; and retired for the night somewhat earlier than usual, to claim from you, my dear Augusta, the laurels justly due to this my first political exploit.



December 24.

I believe the business is done, Augusta, and without requiring from me any further interference.

Yesterday evening, whilst some of the company were engaged at cards, and Geraldine was seated with Julia at work near the fire, my little Charles came running into the room to bid a few of his select friends good night: those he does not conceive any particular regard for, he seldom chooses to bestow much notice upon. His first address was to his father and me; he then went up to Arthur Dudley, who was standing near the ladies at the chimney; from him he proceeded to his aunt Julia,

and finally, springing alertly upon Geraldine's lap, threw his arms round her neck, and after caressing her with great fondness, begged, in a whisper, that she would ask me to let him "sit up just five minutes longer." Geraldine complied, and my consent was easily obtained: but I desired to know why he was so particularly anxious for the short respite he solicited.

"Because I sit here so comfortably, mamma," answered he; "and because the room looks so nice and light, and there are so many people in it."

"Charles seems admirably to understand," said General Wilmington, "what constitutes the comfort of a Christmas drawing-room; an easy station by the fire-side, light, warmth, and a cheerful circle of friends."

As the General ceased speaking, to devote his thoughts with renewed attention to his game, Julia, who was at that moment contemplating the countenance of Charles, suddenly observed, how wonderfully his resemblance to Ferdinand increased every day. The remark induced me to turn my

head, and as I did so, I saw Geraldine, as if struck with the same idea, bend affectionately over the smiling boy, and kiss his rosy cheek! The instant, however, she had given way to the tell-tale impulse, a blush, that betrayed yet more than the action itself, overspread her face; and self-condemned, disconcerted, and scarcely knowing what she did, she hastily placed the child on the ground, rose up, and walked towards one of the card-tables.

To an attentive and interested observer, this little incident, trifling as it may appear, was calculated to discover volumes! It explained every thing to young Dudley. I most wished him to know. An involuntary sigh escaped him—he threw himself upon a sofa at some distance, and hardly looked up again during the rest of the evening.

To day, his whole conduct has given me the most perfect satisfaction, and shows him to possess great delicacy and good sense. Without any sudden transition of attention from Geraldine to my sister, he scrupulously abstains from all communication with

the former but such as common civility exacts; he still wears some appearance of dejection, and his mind seems pre-occupied and unhinged; but he forces himself to support such a part in conversation as shall secure him from animadversion; and has renewed all that friendly intercourse with my mother and me, which was suspended during his late apostasy.

These are very favourable appearances, and prove his determination to submit to necessity like a wise man. I am peculiarly pleased at his renewing his courtship to Julia through the interest of her mother and sister. There would have been something shameless and unfeeling in his turning upon his heel the moment he found Geraldine's heart engaged, and dancing up with the worthless offer of his own to her friend: no, let his regard for Julia gradually revive; he has played truant but for a few days, and I flatter myself he will learn a profitable and permanently useful lesson, by the well-deserved disappointment he has incurred.

My dearest Augusta, here must terminate this long letter, the most circumstantial one I ever wrote in my life. Make the most of it, for it may be years before I have an opportunity to write such another. My best compliments to Mr. Lumley, and love to your dear little girl. By the way, what does the former think of the brisk correspondence Julia has, for so long a time, kept up from hence? Does he cry out much against female scribblers?—Adieu.

Yours most affectionately,

CAROLINE DAVENANT.

LETTER VII.

THE HONOURABLE MRS. NEVILLE, TO FERDINAND
LESMORE, ESQ.

Faulkland Lodge,
Dec. 23.

LET the very sight of my hand-writing vouch for me, my dear friend, that my mind is considerably tranquillized, and that I begin to experience the realization of those soothing predictions with which you sought to flatter and support me. I told you, when last I wrote, that you should not hear from me again, till I felt relieved from the wretched depression of spirits my own imprudence and folly had brought upon me. I have been steady to that declaration: and while gloom and despondency preyed on my feelings, denied myself the indulgence of addressing you: but now, my kind monitor, preserver, and admirable counsellor! now that a gleam of internal sun-

shine re-animates and encourages me, I may venture to call for your congratulations, assured that no intelligence could be more gladdening to your generous heart.

He whose name I so lately shuddered or blushed to mention, Tresilian, in short, wearied or irritated by my determined silence, has, for some time past, wholly ceased to write to me. In consequence of this, partly to disarm him, and partly to mislead him as to the motive of my neglect, I have sent him two or three hasty lines to tell him what, in a great measure, is true, that I have been ill, that I have been wholly unable to read or attend to letters of any kind since my arrival here; and that I am still too much indisposed to carry on a correspondence not indispensably necessary. I end with a few words concerning Emma Cecil, to whom I desire my love, and then, without the slightest reference to the past, sign myself, in the usual phrase, very sincerely his, &c. No answer has arrived to this laconic epistle; which, believe me, I never should have written, but for the ap-

prehension, that if I added, now, a total reserve and silence, to the abruptness with which, on my resolving to quit Westhill, I almost turned him out of my house, he would hoard up against me a degree of resentment, which might break out on a future day in some very distressing manner. Tresilian is what many people call “a warm friend, and a bitter enemy.” The cant expression, such as it is, I understand to mean, a man who is much to be dreaded when thoroughly provoked. I therefore sought to dispel or mitigate the brooding storm; and shall be much gratified and comforted if the step I have taken is sanctioned by your approbation.

The situation I am in at present, and the way of life I pursue, accord most soothingly with the actual temper of my mind. The former is neither grave nor gay; the latter, neither dissipated nor secluded. Lady Alicia Faulkland, my high-born hostess, is a woman *d'un certain age*, still possessing youthful animation sufficient to render her an agreeable companion, and far enough

advanced in life to have attained a full maturity of judgement. She was the intimate friend of my mother, with whose destiny, indeed, her own had one very remarkable coincidence. They were not only married at the same age, but on the same day, and in the same church. My mother, for the misfortune of her only surviving child, died two years after she became a wife, in giving birth to a son, who survived her but a few hours, and was interred in the same grave. Lady Alicia, who has lived to be a blessing to her family, and an ornament to her neighbourhood, has invariably manifested for me the utmost interest and affection. In my early youth, I have spent many happy, and, I trust, not wholly unprofitable hours, beneath her hospitable roof. She has been a widow some years; but has three children; two sons, the second of whom, though still very young, has given proof of such distinguished talents, that he is already high in office; and a daughter, who made a brilliant establishment last year. At this time, none of her family are about her; and she flatters

me with assurances, that my society is peculiarly acceptable to her.

Lady Alicia is the only woman I ever met with, who gives me a perfect idea of what I conceive the French to have meant when they talked of *une vraie Anglaise*. Her first appearance encourages a suspicion, that either through pride or timidity, she is disposed to be extremely reserved; her figure is exactly what foreigners so often attribute to their English personages; tall, fair, slender, and rather pale. She has all the benevolence, gentleness, and modesty I have seen connected with these ideal portraits—a strong attachment to her domestic duties—the virtues, in the highest degree, of a good mother, and a liberal benefactress to the poor—the most exalted principles of honour—and, to crown all, the steadiest and truest piety.

I know not whether our neighbours would, in the present hostile times, draw up such a character of a native of this island; but in a hundred books, written under the old order of things, I have met with its very counter-

part, and never without mentally adverting to Lady Alicia Faulkland.

You will not be surprised to learn, that from such a woman, from so established and tried a friend, I have been unable to disguise the origin of my determination to pay her this unexpected visit. The counsels she was so well qualified to give me, were not my sole inducements for confiding to her prudence a secret of such importance to my reputation: I sought, in a manner, to place her as a barrier between me and any future trespass against propriety; and I felt an irresistible desire to talk to her of the obligations I was under to your friendship, of representing your conduct in the noble point of view in which it has appeared to myself; in short, to make you the object of our conversations, our mutual gratitude, and united admiration. She has seen all your letters, and whilst reading them with tears of mingled joy at my escape, and approbation of your sentiments, lavished upon you the benedictions, almost maternal, of her affectionate heart. She says, that what you

so feelingly and delicately recommended, was precisely the wisest and most virtuous resolution that *could* be pointed out: against some dangers, no combats will avail, nothing but flight can secure us; and she bids me, as long as my existence and memory endure, honour and revere you as my *soul's physician*!

But now, my dear Lesmore, allow me to ask, why is it you are separated from your interesting Geraldine? Shall I venture, in my turn, to offer counsel? Ah, throw not away a treasure of such inestimable worth! What is it that retards your union? What is it that can divide two hearts so expressly formed for each other? Be candid with me, Lesmore—and, above all, impute not to idle and impertinent curiosity the questions I permit myself to address to you. Have you not given me a right, from the brotherly interest you have taken in my affairs, to feel a sister's anxiety respecting your own? The great wish of my heart, is to see you both happy; and its chief pride is to acknow-

ledge, that through your interference, happiness has been almost restored to myself. Adieu.

FREDERICA NEVILLE.

I direct this to Parkton Castle, though I have been told that is not your present place of abode.—Where, then, are you?

LETTER VIII.

FERDINAND LESMORE, ESQ. TO MRS. NEVILLE.

Dec. 27.

THANK Heaven, there exists one noble-minded being to whom my worthless existence has been thought of any utility ! I rejoice to hear that serenity has revisited your breast ; it is, indeed, almost the sole occasion upon which I have had reason to indulge a sentiment of satisfaction, since we parted. Ask me not, dear Mrs. Neville, to explain to you my present situation ; its perplexities are, perhaps, self-raised : but it is very certain they are not to be defined. I deny not the attachment you attribute to me ; its object is still distinguished, above all others, by every excellence, every soul-subduing charm that can captivate the heart of man. I have encountered no repulse ; for the truth is, I have vigilantly abstained from the acknowledgement of any preten-

sions : I voluntarily renounced the blessing of beholding her, and though dragging about a weary, wretched, discontented existence whilst absent from her, compelled myself, but a few days since, wilfully to retard the period when I might enjoy the felicity of being restored to her society ! Can you comprehend such strange inconsistency ? Can you assist me to unravel the ambiguities of my own projects ? - But why do I talk of projects ? - I have formed none ; I make no efforts in my own cause ; but, as if seized with a morbid apathy, am as passive as if I had no interest at stake ; seem madly expecting some miracle to be wrought in my favour ; and appear waiting to be sought out by that happiness it ought to be the first object of my life to court and pursue !

Will you not accuse me, after such a confession, of bearing about “ a mind diseased ? ” Can you undertake to “ administer ” to so wayward a patient ? No, the attempt would be fruitless ; for most truly may it be said, that “ therein the patient must minister unto himself.”

I am now at the house of Mr. Melwyn, in the same county with yourself, and here I have been vegetating and dreaming away my hours, I scarcely know how long, or to what purpose. I must of necessity, however, renew, for a few days, my unsatisfactory sojourn at Highgrove Park. Mr. Archer's invariable kindness, merits not the frigid thanklessness with which I have slighted it. When this visit, far more of duty than of choice, for in what place have I ever suffered so much?—is over, I shall bury myself for the remainder of the winter at Parkton Castle, and there seek oblivion, in solitude and misanthropy, to all regrets, anxieties, hopes, and fears.

I can experience no surprise at the silence Sir Henry Tresilian has observed since the reception of your last letter. An address so calm, cool, and rational, must have perplexed and confounded him. Reproaches, accusations, sallies of passion, are easy to combat and answer: but a dignified moderation overturns all calculation, and disconcerts all design. I have never in my

life been so completely subdued, as when I have encountered indifference and tranquillity where I expected contest and opposition.

Perhaps I may not have the honour of seeing you till you are established for the spring in your town abode : but amongst the few pleasant expectations I venture to entertain, one of the most precious to my heart is, that wherever or whenever we may meet, you will always allow me the privilege of considering myself as your devoted and acknowledged friend.

FERDINAND LESMORE.

LETTER IX.

EREDERIC ARCHER, ESQ. TO LORD GLENOSWALD.

My Lord,

Highgrove Park,
Dec. 27.

THE friends I have had the happiness of seeing assembled beneath my roof, are beginning to disperse, and I shall, in a very few days, be at liberty to obey your lordship's obliging summons. The season is mild, and as favourable for travelling as it would be reasonable to expect: but were it otherwise, it is not any consideration of personal inconvenience that would withhold me from paying my respects to your lordship and Mr. Glenoswald. I value too highly the permission you have granted me of renewing our ancient amity, to neglect seizing the earliest opportunity of conveying myself to Howel Court: and since your lordship assures me*, Mr. Glenoswald is

* The letter here alluded to is omitted.

prepared for, and fortified against the emotion my niece's first appearance, I feared, might excite, it will be with the liveliest pleasure I shall make her the companion of my journey.

There can be no necessity, it appears to me, for acquainting her with past occurrences. You shall behold her with all her native ease, uninfluenced by the consciousness of being descended from one who wrought such woe to your house, unsubdued by painful timidity, and unembarrassed by mortifying reflections. Yet shall I not have the pleasure of presenting her to your lordship in all her accustomed brilliancy: some youthful disappointment preys upon her spirits. I think I can divine its source; but whencesoever it springs, certain it is, that at this moment she is extremely different from her former self. In gaiety alone, however, is she changed; her sweetness of temper, her conciliating manners, her promptitude in conferring good upon all who approach her—these remain unaltered: and these, to such as have not known her in her

more animated hours,—these will ever be sufficient to render her one of the most engaging of nature's favoured children!

I await your lordship's answer with impatience, and have the honour to be, with the highest respect,

My Lord,

Your lordship's obliged and
obedient humble servant,

FREDERIC ARCHER.

LETTER X.

TO FREDERIC ARCHER, ESQ.

Howel Court,
Dec. 29.

My dear Sir,

YOUR letter has given us a new being ! My son is profoundly grateful for your condescending indulgence to our wishes ; and the pleasure with which it fills me to behold him, once more, an animated participator in this world's concerns, exalts my obligation to you beyond the power of words to express ! We grieve that the distance is so great ; and, at times, sincerely reproach ourselves for exposing you, and your fair fellow traveller, to the inclemencies of so rude a season of the year : but then we reflect, that our abode, though situated amidst rocks and torrents, is sheltered, and rendered inaccessible to the cold blasts of the north. Your apartment, and that of your niece, are already preparing for your reception ; fires have been kept up in them

every day; and you may depend upon our bestowing as much foresight and care upon your accommodation, and defence from the severity of these mountainous regions, as if our household were blessed by the superintendence of a tender and attentive manager, like your Geraldine.

I will only add, that the sooner you put your meditated act of charity into effect, the greater will be the favour conferred, dear sir, upon your grateful friend, and very humble servant,

GLENOSWALD.

LETTER XI.

MISS LESMORE TO MRS. LUMLEY.

Highgrove Park,
Jan. 1.

A HAPPY new year to my dearest Augusta! It opens upon us resplendently, for I think I never saw a more brilliant sun than shone upon our breakfast-party this morning. Since I last wrote, however, our number has diminished to less than a moiety its former amount. We are now reduced to four guests only; my mother, Albert, Clara, and myself: and even that small residue disperses to-morrow. Monsieur de St. Hermine and his wife, have every thing packed up for going to take temporary possession of their borrowed residence, Woodville; their mother accompanies them, to put the poor souls in a good way of becoming notable housekeepers. *My* mother and I take our departure early the day after to-morrow,

for Parkton Castle; and what I am sure you will deem, at such a period of the year, astonishing, Mr. Archer and Geraldine, like some knight and damsel of the heroic ages, sally forth at the same moment, in search of adventures through the wilds of North Wales! I never was more astonished than when I first heard him announce such a scheme; Geraldine herself could scarcely be persuaded to believe he was in earnest; all incredulity, however, was speedily put to flight by the gravity of his manner; and yet more by the various orders he had given preparatory to his departure. Whither he is going, I can scarcely exactly make out; but I believe it is into Carnarvonshire, to visit a solitary old nobleman, with whom, many years since, he was in habits of great intimacy. My mother, I suspect, knows more: but she looks mysterious when I question her, and declines giving me any satisfactory intelligence. Geraldine is as little in the secret as I am, and appears perfectly indifferent whether she goes east, west, north, or south. Travelling, except

from Highgrove Park to London, is new to her, and the prospect of a change of scene, she acknowledges, gives her, at this time, considerable pleasure. I grieve to say that she requires it. The alteration of expression in her countenance, and the tendency to seriousness which has usurped the place of that soul-enlivening vivacity that used to sparkle in her eyes, and brighten every look, are apparent to the whole family, and excite sympathy and sorrow in all beholders. Cruel Lesmore! has he not trifled with the feelings of this sweet girl? sometimes courting, at others shunning her; at one period treating her with neglect and scorn, at another worshipping her as an idol! Where is the strongly fortified mind able to support, unmoved, such repeated trials?

We hear nothing further from him. Indeed Mr. Archer, as I understand, has disdained to answer his last letter. A rigid silence is observed concerning him; or, if his name accidentally occurs, Geraldine changes colour; her uncle knits his brows; my mother looks ashamed; and Madame de

St. Hermine hastens to start a different subject. It would be a just punishment to him, were he to arrive the very day after we have all quitted the house !

Poor Clara has been in serious disgrace with her mother-in-law for several days, in consequence of her thoughtless behaviour, to use the gentlest language I can, towards Colonel Courtville. The authority Madame de St. Hermine has been compelled to exert, has had its effect, and the little person, with many tears and professions of concern at her own levity, promises amendment, and implicit observance of the sage precepts recommended to her. Albert, I believe, forbore to become a party in the quarrel ; but he has, at length, been provoked, or advised, to show various and very palpable indications of a disposition to check his wife's caprices ; and perhaps, by uniting their forces, the mother and son may succeed in rendering her a more tolerable inmate.

Caroline and Davenant only left us yesterday, and the Dudleys made their bow at

the same time. And now, to confess the truth, I am somewhat embarrassed how to proceed; I deferred the mention of these good people as long as I could spin out any other subject; but I have gained nothing by it. I shall therefore resign the pen to my mother, who is now sitting by me, and leave her to inform you what an easy fool your poor Julia has proved herself.

POSTSCRIPT BY MRS. LESMORE.

Your sister, my dear Augusta, is too severe upon herself, and by no means merits the epithet she chooses to assume. I am most willing and happy, however, to announce to you, that, after a temporary defection, which she has had the generosity to forgive, Arthur Dudley gained courage to apply to me for permission to visit us at Parkton Castle, and become a candidate for Miss Lesmore's hand. I hesitated not in according the boon he solicited; and so sincere appears to be his contrition, so undissembled his return to his old allegiance,

and so deserving and amiable have I ever thought him, that I make no scruple in calling for your felicitations upon the prospect that seems to await a sister you so affectionately love. I own myself perfectly friendly to Arthur's cause; the Davenants are yet more favourable to him; and I trust that Ferdinand and you require only to know, in order to approve, him as cordially as we do.

But how ill-judged a line of conduct is your brother pursuing for himself! I cannot expatiate upon such a subject, for it wounds me to the very soul! You, I am sure, know how to feel for the regret and mortification he has brought upon us.

Heaven bless you, my dear child!

M. LESMORE.



MISS LESMORE—IN CONTINUATION.

Jan. 2.

THOUGH it is late, my dear Augusta, and every body is retiring for the night, I can-

not lie down to rest without communicating to you the events of this evening.

About three hours ago, Geraldine and I being in the dressing-room, busily sorting and separating our drawings, chalk, paper, &c. we heard a carriage driving up to the house, and a loud ring at the front bell. Though curious to know who could have chosen so unusual a time of night to pay a visit, I was too much engaged to disturb myself; but Geraldine, who had concluded her part of the task, and was going back to the drawing-room, promised to bring or send me notice, if it was any body she thought I might wish to see. I thanked her for an offer that accorded so well at once with my love of hearing news, and my reluctance to quit the occupation I was about, and she left the room.

In less than three minutes, however, she returned—fluttered, breathless, surprised—and faltered out,—

“ Julia, it is your brother ! ”

“ My brother ? is it possible ? and have you seen him ? ”

“No—but as I stood upon the head of the stairs, I heard his voice in the hall.”

We were both silent for some moments; at length, shocked to reflect how cold and solemn a reception he was likely to experience, I started up, saying,—

“Poor Ferdinand! I think he will rejoice to see me. Come Geraldine, shall we go down?”

“I will follow you,” said she, with some hesitation, “in five minutes.”

I would not press her, for I saw that she was agitated, and almost trembling; and very naturally concluded she wished to gain time to assume more firmness.

As I opened the drawing-room door, I felt disturbed and confused myself. Angry as I had been with Lesmore, for some weeks past, I could not be wholly divested of pity for the awkward and trying situation he was in; and though I longed, yet I also feared to see what turn affairs would take.

He came forward to meet me before I had advanced three steps within the room, and very affectionately embraced me,—but

without speaking; after which, we both walked towards the fire.

Madame de St. Hermine, with an air of inflexible gravity, was sitting at some distance, working; my mother, stationed at her side, seemed afraid either to look or speak, any of the kind things with which I am sure her heart overflowed. Clara was playing with Geraldine's dog upon the sofa; her husband was writing letters in the library; and Mr. Archer, upon whom displeasure against Lesmore sat as awkwardly as it did upon my mother herself, paraded, with unequal pace, up and down the room, from time to time asking Ferdinand how he found the roads? what sort of horses he got at the last post town? and various other questions, solely uttered for the purpose of saying something.

To these, Lesmore's answers were as brief as was consistent with the respect due to the person from whom they proceeded; his eyes were perpetually turned towards Madame de St. Hermine, from whom he seemed to be imploring one look, at least, of en-

couragement and kindness: but, as if doubtful of her own firmness should she allow herself to regard him, she industriously avoided raising her head, and, with equal pertinacity, forbore to speak.

To afford him some relief from so irksome a scene of constraint, I asked him whether he had yet seen Monsieur de St. Hermine? and, on his answering in the negative, added, “he is only in the next room; go to him, my dear Ferdinand.”

Whilst he was absent, I approached the little working party, and said, in a low voice, to Madame de St. Hermine,—

“Were you only to cast one glance upon my brother’s changed and melancholy aspect, you would abate a little of your displeasure towards him.”

“No, my dear Julia,” answered she, with a sort of *mild sternness*, if I may be allowed the expression,—“no, I have cast, with a sorrowing heart, too many glances upon the *changed and melancholy aspect* of Geraldine, easily to relent towards the man who has ungenerously caused that change!”

These words, piercing as they were, filled my eyes with tears; and I stole away, too much shocked to attempt any answer.

“Where is Miss Fauconberg?” inquired Clara, as I placed myself upon one end of the sofa she occupied; “does she know Mr. Lesmore is here?”

“Yes, she does.”

“Why, then, does she not come down? Is he,” continued she, lowering her voice, “in disgrace with her too, as well as with the rest of the party?”

“In disgrace?” repeated I, colouring.

“Oh, that he is!—you never in your life saw such glum faces as they all put on the moment he entered the room!”

“And, do you imagine this can be very pleasant intelligence to *me*?”

“Why, no, nor very pleasant reality to him, poor soul!”

That Lesmore should have reduced himself to such a state of humiliation, as to give Clara any pretence to affect compassion for him, I own, hurt my pride more than all

to which I had been witness had wounded my feelings.

“Pray spare both your comments and your pity,” said I, drily; “my brother, I suspect, would be but little flattered by either.”

At that moment, Geraldine, with greater tranquillity than I could have expected, entered the room. She seemed confounded at Ferdinand’s absence, and coming close up to me, after looking apprehensively round the apartment, said softly, “Would he not stay?”

“He is only gone, my love, to speak to Albert in the library.”

A gleam of satisfaction shone in her eyes, and she quietly seated herself near my mother.

Presently after, Lesmore rejoined us. At sight of Geraldine, the blood rushed into his cheeks, and then, as impetuously, forsook them; an emotion, such as I had never observed in him before, shook his whole frame, and, unable to articulate a single sen-

tence with distinctness, he bowed with an air of mingled humility and dejection that instantly banished from her mind every wish but that of seeing him appear more unembarrassed and serene.

“Mr. Lesmore,” said she, extending to him her hand, with the benignity of an angel, “I am happy to see you:”—and then, as if to avert all retrospection, to avoid adding a syllable that could recall to our minds the tardiness with which he had rendered himself visible, she immediately added, “Julia, have you given to your brother the miniature I have finished for him? I hope he will think it as good a resemblance as the one I so unceremoniously refused him.”

The sweetness of this address, penetrated our poor culprit with sensations of such grateful surprise; the friendly tone of her voice, and the modest frankness of her manner, were so reassuring and consolatory, that raising her hand to his lips, with glistening eyes, and in accents that spoke to the heart,

“ Ah, Miss Fauconberg,” he cried, “ how utterly beyond the power of language to express, is the deep sense I entertain of such unmerited goodness !”

Geraldine’s cheeks were tinged with a faint blush, as she gently withdrew her hand, and, turning to me, said,

“ You see, my dear Julia, the picture will be even more thankfully received than we expected. Pray fetch it, that Mr. Lesmore may be able to judge whether he has not been too precipitate in his acknowledgements.”

I immediately produced it from amongst some other trinkets I had packed up in my work-box.

To render this portrait as different as possible from the one she had given to my mother, Geraldine has represented me in the exact *costume* and attitude of a beautiful up-raised female head, painted by some celebrated old master, which is in the collection of the nobleman whose pictures we went to see the day poor Cæsar first became known to his present benevolent patron.

Ferdinand had been peculiarly pleased with this painting; and the attempt to transfer some of its grace and sweetness to my humble and unclassical little physiognomy, was, no doubt, intended as a compliment to Lesmore's taste. However that may be, the miniature enchanted him; and was received almost upon bent knees, almost with adoration, both of the gift, and the giver.

The sort of ease and cheerfulness which the subject thus fortunately introduced diffused over nearly the whole party—I say *nearly*, because Madame de St. Hermine still preserved an appearance of reserve, and Mr. Archer kept aloof, and joined only occasionally in the conversation—was rather increased than diminished by the additional presence of Albert, who now joined us for the remainder of the evening; and an hour elapsed, during which it would have been difficult for an observer, not deeply interested in what was passing, to descry any thing upon which to found a suspicion, that the least estrangement subsisted among the persons assembled together.

During all this time, however, Mr. Archer, as it afterwards appeared, was arguing himself into resolution, and pondering upon the necessity of announcing to my brother, that, on the following morning, every inhabitant of Highgrove Park would take wing, and the deserted mansion alone remain! After a long internal struggle, the remains of kindness he still felt for his former favourite were so strong, that he found it impossible to be himself the publisher of such information; and suddenly renouncing the design, he called me to a distant part of the room.

“ Julia,” he cried, “ I cannot bring myself to inflict greater mortification upon your brother, than, from the coldness of our reception, he must already have experienced. Do you take upon yourself to inform him, that Geraldine and I are going from home: tell him, if you choose it, that I am sorry it happens so; or rather,” added he, the recollection of Lesmore’s wilful delay, rendering him peevish,—“ rather tell him, I wish, with all my soul, that angel who is

now treating him with such undeserved clemency, had never beheld his perverse, tormenting face!"

So saying, he flung from me, and went into his study.

A little recovered from the dismay his last words had excited, I stole round to the back of my mother's chair, and, in a whisper, acquainted her with their general purport; entreating she would take upon herself the commission that had been assigned to me. She nodded a tacit assent, and I resumed my place.

Geraldine, perhaps suspecting what had passed, looked at me as if to refute or confirm her conjectures. I turned my head another way; and at that moment Clara, addressing my brother, said,—

"We drove past poor forsaken Westhill, on Sunday, Mr. Lesmore, and you can't think how forlorn and melancholy a place it now looks. Pray have you seen its mistress, or heard any thing about her whilst you have been in Gloucestershire?"

An instantaneous glance at Ferdinand

told me that he *had*; and I hastened to reply for him,—

“Why, my dear Clara, what in the world can induce you to interest yourself about Mrs. Neville? You never spoke three words to each other in your lives.”

“But why would not you let your brother answer me? I don’t pretend to be a friend of Mrs. Neville’s, but I know enough of her to wish to hear where she is, and how she is going on: do, then, Mr. Lesmore, tell me, have you seen her, or heard of her lately?”

“I have been informed she is well, but never had the pleasure of meeting her.”

“Ah!” thought I, “informed from *herself*, I doubt not, by your embarrassed countenance!”

My mother, now, after a little *hem*, and two or three hesitating attempts to speak, looked at her watch, and said to Geraldine,—

“On the eve of a journey, my dear, you should not allow your friends to keep you up too late; it is near eleven o’clock:—will

you permit Monsieur de St. Hermine to ring for the supper-tray?"

"On the eve of a journey!" repeated Lesmore, amazed, "Is Miss Fauconberg, then, going from home?"

"We are *all* going from hence, my dear Ferdinand. Mr. Archer is extremely sorry for it; but his engagement is of a nature that cannot be put off. Madame de St. Hermine sets out at the same time for Woodville, with her son and daughter; and, Julia and I shall, once more, re-establish ourselves at Parkton Castle."

Lesmore was silent, and seemed petrified with astonishment: whilst Geraldine, suddenly snatching the dog from Clara, and leaning over him, appeared to be studying the words engraved upon his collar. Clara, thus deprived of her plaything, sauntered away to examine the contents of the supper-tray; her husband followed her; and no one remaining immediately in our vicinity, Ferdinand came and stood opposite the sofa Geraldine and I occupied.—

"Will Miss Fauconberg" said he, in an

ill-assured voice, “allow me to inquire into the object and direction of this, to me, unexpected journey?”

“The first,” answered she, without raising her head, “is to visit an invalid friend of my uncle’s; the second, I scarcely, with certainty, know myself; but I believe it is into Carnarvonshire.”

“Carnarvonshire!” re-echoed he, with a start, as if some painful recollection rushed across his mind, “this exceeds even my worst apprehensions!”

Geraldine now looked up, and, shocked at the despondency of his countenance, tremulously said,—

“What apprehensions, Mr. Lesmore? for Heaven’s sake, what is it you mean?”

“Tell me,” added he, disregarding her inquiry, “tell me, is it not to Howel Court you are going? to Lord Glenoswald’s? to the near relation, the friend . . .”—There he stopped; and seeing in her face an air of assent, to the first part of the interrogation, a look of suspense and eager curiosity as to what he meant to add, he sighed from the

bottom of his heart, and turned slowly from us.

Geraldine seized my hand, and rising to follow him, drew me after her.

“You perplex, you almost alarm me, Mr. Lesmore!” cried she, seeking in his averted face some explanation of the hints he had thrown out: “I entreat you will be more explicit; these half-uttered insinuations, the names you have mentioned, your air, your manner, all prove that something yet remains to be told, and all fill me with anxiety to know, of what nature that something can be!”

After a short pause, “Miss Fauconberg,” said he, mournfully, “it must not be my office to reveal to you more than your uncle has chosen to declare. Oh, that it were yet time—that I might still seek to redeem—yet dare to aspire!”

He concealed his face with his hands, and murmuring to himself, “Oh, fool, fool!” a groan, almost audible, escaped him.

Geraldine, pale as marble, stood speech-

less and aghast; whilst, grasping his hand, I cried,—

“Are you distracted, Ferdinand? Whence all this disturbance? this terrible agitation? Is it generous to raise so much alarm, and continue impenetrable as to its cause?”

“I am not fit,” answered he, in an inward and faltering tone, “to pursue this conversation, to remain any longer in your presence!” Then observing the colourless cheeks, and pitying expression of Geraldine’s soft countenance, he fervently exclaimed,—

“Sweetest of all created beings! loveliest Geraldine—too, too tardily valued, and, oh! with what anguish regretted!”—His feelings seemed to choak him, he abruptly broke off, and after taking two or three hasty turns up and down the room to regain more composure, uttered a general “Good night,” and went into the study to take leave of Mr. Archer.

Geraldine, immoveable, bewildered, and looking after him with a solicitude that betrayed the tenderest anxiety, sunk into a

chair when he was gone, and whilst her face was hid from all but me, I saw that it was covered with tears.

“Glide quietly out of the room, my love,” whispered I, “and leave me to account for your retreat.”

She silently pressed my hand, and the next moment disappeared.

Though long in the recital, all this had passed in so short an interval—they had both, though so strongly agitated, spoken in so subdued a tone, that no creature in the room had the remotest suspicion of the interesting nature of their discourse; nor was the absence of Geraldine immediately perceived: but just as they were beginning to make some observations upon it, Mr. Archer came forth from the adjoining apartment.—

“Julia,” said he to me, in a low voice, “how did our young man receive the intelligence I left you to communicate?”

“With equal sorrow, surprise, and resignation, sir,” answered I.

“Sorrow?” repeated he, somewhat incredulously.

“Yes, dear Mr. Archer, with genuine, unfeigned sorrow! Had his countenance no traces of it remaining when he presented himself before you?”

“I hardly looked at him, and his voice was so low, husky, and indistinct, I understood not three words he uttered.”

“And were these,” cried I, “no indications to you of his feelings?”

“Confound his feelings!” exclaimed Mr. Archer, almost in a passion; “with what face can *he* pretend to feelings now, who has hitherto shown no thought but for the indulgence of his own obstinate prejudices? no anxiety but for the gratification of his own caprices? no care but for the preservation of his own arrogant and fastidious apathy? Julia,” added he, with more calmness, “I loved him as a son; next to Geraldine, I thought him the noblest and most highly favoured of nature’s children. With transport would I have joined their hands, had he been friendless, penniless, re-

duced to the lowest depth of adversity ; for I thought he had a soul that no situation could debase ; a heart warm, generous, grateful as that of the incomparable creature I destined for his partner !—But he has shaken these opinions, these projects, these hopes ; shaken them to their very foundation. Like an insidious foe, he has taken advantage of the easy access I granted to him beneath my roof ; first, to insult by his disdain, then to soften by his assiduities, and finally, to afflict, by his desertion, the being whom of all others he knew my heart was most fondly wrapt up in ;—the mild, modest, tender, and too unresenting being, of whose happiness, I vainly flattered myself, he alone was worthy to become the guardian !”

Tears trickled down my cheeks whilst listening to this cruel but not unprovoked harangue ; and I had only courage, when he paused, to say,—

“ Oh, sir, think not, speak not of him so hardly !”

He took my hand, and looking at me with great kindness, said,—

“ I have been ungenerous, my dear Julia, in causing you this distress. You, I well know, are blameless throughout this whole vexatious affair ; and my heart smites me for having made you the auditor of complaints, which, however just, cannot but appear to you, as an affectionate sister, harsh and severe. We will here put an end to the subject,—one I should never have expressed myself so bitterly upon, had I been spared the afflicting sight of Geraldine rendered unhappy through your brother’s means.”

He then left me ; and, completely upset by all that had passed, I made a hasty exit, and ran up stairs to give some relief to the oppression of my spirits, by confiding to you, the ill-boding circumstances of the evening.



Jan. 3.

I BROKE off abruptly last night, being interrupted by the unexpected and unusual

appearance, in my room, of Madame de St. Hermine. When she left me, it was too late to resume the pen: I therefore kept my letter open, and now sit down to finish it at an inn, where my mother, feeling tired, means to spend the night, in preference to pursuing her journey to Parkton Castle in the dark.

Madame de St. Hermine, on her first entrance, evidently laboured under considerable embarrassment. I found that her principal inducement for coming, was the friendly wish of apologizing to me for any pain which the repulsive part she had acted towards my brother might have occasioned me.

“I hated myself,” she added, “for the unkind appearance I must make both in Mrs. Lesmore’s eyes and yours. Had the disappointment to all my better expectations been inflicted by one I had formerly less esteemed and valued, I should have found it easier to disguise my displeasure; but dashed from the height of confidence and good opinion, to the depth of distrust

and mortification, I found it impossible to unbend : and felt that my silence, however ungracious, would indicate less resentment than any thing I might have uttered."

I was speechless, my heart was full, and the unfavourable sentiments thus unequivocally expressed, joined to all I had heard from Mr. Archer, began to render me so wholly desperate of Lesmore's cause, that I judged it scarcely less than madness to indulge the hope of being able, by any thing I could say, to mitigate such serious disapprobation.

"I see," resumed she, after vainly waiting some minutes for an answer, "I see that my undissembling Julia is deeply hurt by my conduct. Yet, let her not imagine me disposed to become an active enemy to her brother, though I have shown myself a tacit condemner. I may be mistaken ; but a strong persuasion now haunts me, that he is, in some way or other, entangled, past extricating, with Mrs. Neville. I marked, unobserved, the expression of his countenance when our ill-judging Clara questioned

him concerning her; and, from whatever cause, I certainly discerned the clearest evidences of consciousness in his face, and in his answer, the most cautious, not to say equivocating, brevity. When the circumstance of his secret correspondence with that lady was first officiously revealed to us, I disdained the idea of attaching to it the smallest importance; but my opinion of the business is completely changed: and, to nothing but infatuation for another, can I possibly attribute his late breach of engagement here, his total silence to you whilst at the house of Mr. Melwyn, and his apparent indifference as to the inferences we might draw from a conduct which, to say the least of it, is ill-bred to Mr. Archer; unkind to his own family, so many of whom he knew were assembled here; and unaccountable to all who have witnessed the undisguised partiality with which, on former visits, he has ever been distinguished. Mr. Archer, however, is influenced by none of these considerations; he knows not that a single letter ever passed between Mrs. Neville

and your brother ; and her image, as the rival of Geraldine, never presented itself in the faintest colours to his imagination. All would be over were such an idea once to occur to him ; and when I assured you, I would not become the active enemy of Mr. Lesmore, I meant, that scarcely any inducement should impel me to turn his accuser upon that subject. Geraldine's late evident depression is the chief point upon which her uncle's present displeasure rests : mine, I am sorry to say, has the additional incitement of want of reliance on his sincerity ; want of faith in the perfect artlessness of his proceedings."

I sighed, hung my head, and felt incapable of articulating a single exculpatory sentence. Madame de St. Hermine had said no more than had already occurred to my own mind a thousand times, and, though grieved to hear such sentiments avowed by another, I could experience no surprise, nor did I seem entitled to call that injustice in her, of which I had involuntarily been so often guilty myself.

She regarded me with some anxiety, on finding me, apparently, determined not to speak, and, ashamed of being suspected of sullenness, I forced myself to say, she was very good to take the trouble of accounting to me for her conduct; it was such, I added, as no one ever had reason to arraign; and I hoped the time would yet arrive, when, upon satisfactory motives, she might be induced again to regard with kindness her disgraced favourite.

Soon after this she left me; and I, at length, retired to bed with as little disposition to rest as it was well possible to feel.

At seven o'clock in the morning, my mother's maid undrew my curtains, and disturbed me out of the first sound sleep I had enjoyed, not, as I expected, to assist me in rising and preparing for our journey, but, in the true spirit of an Hibernian, to inform me I might lie still two hours longer, as it was now settled that none of the party would set out before twelve o'clock.

“I wish, my dear Mrs. Johnson,” cried I, “you would have been contented to let

this information come to me in a dream, or had kept it back till I thought of inquiring why you did not call me sooner."

"Oh, ma'am, I am sure you would have been sadly bustled and frightened, if I had let you sleep till nine o'clock, and you had then woke, and fancied I had forgotten your orders. Now, you may take another nap in comfort."

"Not so easily done as said," thought I. However, she meant well; so I bid her close the curtains, without any further animadversions, and tried to put in practice the snug scheme she had recommended. But it would not do; my eyes were heavy, but my thoughts were all awake; and, at the end of an hour, perceiving that my fire had been lighted, I punished her officiousness by ringing the bell, and disturbing her from a charming hot breakfast she was enjoying in the housekeeper's room.

"Mrs. Johnson," cried I, "I can't sleep, so you must assist me to dress; and tell me how this change in my mother's plans came about."

Her lips were still greasy, and she had scarcely swallowed the last mouthful of well-buttered toast when thus cruelly forced into my service: but she bore the tantalizing interruption with great good-humour, and in the pleasure of talking, I believe almost forgot the loss of her third dish of tea.

She told me the delay of our journey was owing to the difficulty of procuring a sufficient number of post horses. “For you know, ma’am,” she continued, “ther’ll be three carriages, besides hack-chaises for the servants; and, in these distant parts, there’s no great abundance either of cattle or drivers.”

She would then have made some remarks upon what she called the *oddity* of letting ’squire Lesmore have the trouble of coming so far, just to find us all going away; and, upon the general dissatisfaction this circumstance had occasioned in Mrs. Prescott’s apartments. But I abridged her murmurs upon this subject as much as I could, and, detaining her no longer than I could possibly avoid, dismissed her to the enjoyment,

if there was any remaining, of another slice of toast.

“ Lord bless me, ma’am ! you think we are all so fond of toast ! and, I assure you, there are many days, when, if I was to eat the least little bit of butter that ever was, I should be so ill that nothing could be like it.”

“ Ah, my dear Mrs. Johnson, that is when you have eat too much the day before ! But I hope you are in good appetite for it this morning, and so, go and see whether the greedy creatures have left you any.”

She muttered to herself, “ Lord bless us ! what fancies ladies will take ! ” and, not very reluctantly, descended.

Our own breakfast was called for considerably earlier than usual ; soon after nine we were all assembled round the tea urn, with faces very little differing from the expression they had worn when we last parted. No cordial greetings were heard ; scarcely even a mechanical observation upon the weather was made : but grave and chill, we met with a silent inclination of the head, and proceeded to the business of eating and

drinking, as to a relief from the obligation of forcing conversation.

In the midst of this unsocial meal, happening to cast my eyes towards one of the windows, I saw a horseman rapidly approaching, whom, on a nearer view, I recognized to be Lord Litchmere. He had not been at Highgrove Park for three or four days; and I instantly concluded that the object of his present visit, was to ascertain the truth of the report which had probably reached him, of the impending journey of Mr. Archer and Geraldine.

There was no one, I well knew, whose presence would not have been more desirable to Ferdinand; and I sincerely regretted, that every species of vexation should seem thus to accumulate around him during the short period he was destined to remain in the house.

Lord Litchmere entered the breakfast-room with an air of animation wholly different from the late character of his countenance; foreign, indeed, to his own nature, unless upon very rare and extraordinary

occasions. He was beginning to talk of the Welsh expedition, and seemed disposed to expatiate largely upon the subject: but Mr. Archer somewhat checked his volubility, by saying,—

“ We will anticipate nothing, my lord; my niece scarcely knows where she is going; and, to a traveller young as she is, the pleasure of surprise is not one of the least delightful. Come, take a place at our breakfast-table, and leave old Cambria to proclaim, rather to the *eye* than the *ear*, its beauties and sublimity.”

“ But,” resumed Lord Litchmere, “ my groom has brought with him a small parcel of books, which if you would have the goodness to take charge of, and deliver at ——”

“ Certainly, my lord, certainly; and any thing else, in which I can be of use to your lordship, you shall inform me of when I go to my study. Let Miss Lesmore now pour you out a dish of coffee.”

All this so plainly indicated Mr. Archer's wish to change the conversation, that his

noble guest could do no less than take the hint: and we could do no less than feel extremely surprised at an affectation of mystery, so little consonant to Mr. Archer's natural character.

The whole of this morning was destined to be, for our poor Lesmore, replete with unpleasant circumstances. No sooner had Lord Litchmere been silenced upon one unwelcome subject, than, turning to my brother, he started another.

"When did you arrive, Mr. Lesmore?" inquired he.

"Last night, my lord."

"How unfortunate! Then you knew nothing of the meditated flight of Miss Falconberg and her uncle?"

"No, my lord."

"And really," cried Clara, "if I dared tell Mr. Archer so, I should say it was monstrously odd not to apprise Mr. Lesmore of this scheme!"

"My dear Clara," said Mr. Archer, forcing a smile, "there are so many more material circumstances in life, which, to your

youthful apprehension, no doubt appear *odd* and inexplicable, that I would counsel you not to mispend your time in the labyrinth of wonder, but wait patiently till a longer habit of observation enables you to deduce effects from their causes."

Geraldine now rose from the table, under pretence of feeding, at the window, a little society of robins she has rendered by encouragement so tame that they come every morning to sue for our crumbs. The sash was bolted; and, finding some difficulty in unfastening it, she called upon my brother for assistance. He flew to her side, truly thankful, I am persuaded, to cut short a conference of which he was made, so little to his own satisfaction, the object. They remained at the window a considerable time, and might, perhaps, have lingered yet longer, had not Mr. Archer, in a tone of fretfulness that forcibly contrasted with his usual manner of addressing Geraldine, called out,—

"Do, pray child, sit down again and finish your breakfast! you have made the

room so cold by opening the window for those plaguy birds, that I wish all their necks were wrung round ! ”

Startled and surprised, the tears stole into Geraldine's eyes, and she resumed her place in total silence. Ferdinand still maintained his post at the window, where he continued wrapt in melancholy contemplation till Lord Litchmere and Mr. Archer retired together into the study.

“ I wonder, Miss Fauconberg,” said Clara when they were gone, “ what is the matter with your uncle this morning ! I never heard him speak so crossly to you before.”

“ And has not every uncle,” said Geraldine, assuming an air of cheerfulness, “ a right to be cross sometimes, if he pleases ? ”

“ With so sweet a disposition as yours,” said Albert, charmed by her answer, “ I can hardly allow the privilege ! ”

Geraldine made a laughing bow in return for this little compliment, and said,—

“ My disposition has never been put to the test ; it is therefore equally impossible to say what are its merits, or its defects.”

As if conscience-struck by this assertion, Ferdinand turned round, and looked at her with a meaning that so intelligibly, though tacitly, disavowed its justice,—an air so contrite, so profoundly touched by the innumerable excellencies of disposition *he* had given her such frequent occasion to display, that she cast down her eyes, and a gentle sigh betrayed how well she understood him.

When Mr. Archer and Lord Litchmere rejoined us, the former, as if anxious to reconcile himself with his lovely niece, found a thousand pretexts to consult her relative to their arrangements in the travelling chaise; was solicitous to know what precautions could be taken to fence her from the cold; gave her leave, if she wished it, to make her little spaniel the companion of their journey; in short, said and looked every thing that was best calculated to obliterate from her memory the slightest trace of his petulance, the least suspicion of his harbouring any remaining displeasure against her. Geraldine, enchanted by his

returning kindness, answered him with an alacrity, and assented to all he proposed with a readiness and good-humour, that restored him to self-approbation, and thus swiftly passed away the first little cloud which, since I can remember, ever obscured the sunshine of Mr. Archer's favour towards his gentle and affectionate ward.

Lord Litchmere remained with us till the carriages were at the door; he obtained no opportunity, however, of addressing Geraldine apart, though incessantly upon the watch. Regarding him now as decidedly convalescent, her pity no longer prompts her to show herself more considerate towards him than towards any one else, and she sedulously kept out of his way. Lesmore wandered from one window to the other, too ill at ease to attempt conversing; and every body appeared so unsettled, and some were so comfortless, that the moment of departure was a moment of real relief.

Geraldine and I, before we ascended the respective carriages that waited for us, embraced with the most affectionate, and, I

trust, reciprocal kindness and regret. She promised to write to me; and we anticipated with pleasure the prospect of meeting in London early in spring. Madame de St. Hermine had, as yet, no leave to take of her pupil, for Mr. Archer had previously determined, by way of handsomely installing the young married couple in their new abode, to deviate a few miles from his direct road, and sleep one night at Woodville. But, in the reviewers' phrase, "we must compress our remarks" a little; since, to describe minutely what every body says or does upon an occasion like the present, would be tedious beyond bearing, and is, luckily, next to impossible! Ferdinand accepted my mother's offer of a seat in her coach. Mrs. Johnson conveyed herself, and a host of parcels and packages, into the same chaise with my brother's valet; and in due time we all drove off.

Yet, before I entirely dismiss myself, and our whole party, from dear Highgrove Park, I must observe, with real grief of heart, that no reconciliation, not even the semblance

of any, took place between Mr. Archer, Madame de St. Hermine, and Lesmore. The former, when stepping into his carriage, only made him a passing bow, saying gravely, "A pleasant journey to you, Mr. Lesmore; I think the day promises to clear up." And the latter, though she could not refuse his offered hand to conduct her to the vehicle she was to occupy, gave him so little encouragement to speak with the freedom and friendship of former times, that he led her forward in total silence, and they parted with the same taciturn civility, the same chilling reserve.

We have all felt miserable, and been gloomy and unsociable throughout the day. My mother, who never was seriously offended with Ferdinand five minutes in her life, pities, far more than she blames, him even at this very period: yet is she deeply chagrined by the turn affairs have taken; and so distressed at Lesmore's apparent wretchedness, that she sits, speechless and dismayed, contemplating his altered countenance, and ready, I verily believe, to ac-

cuse Mr. Archer, and even Geraldine herself, of injustice and cruelty !

Let me, however, with grateful affection acknowledge, that the only bright and cheerful look with which Ferdinand's countenance has this day been animated, was called forth by the intelligence my mother communicated to him of your Julia's prospects. All the brother, the kind and tender brother, shone in his aspect on hearing this information ; and for some time he conversed on the subject with the most lively zeal and cordiality. When a new turn was given to the discourse he relapsed into thoughtfulness and melancholy.

I have made one or two fruitless attempts to draw from him an explanation of the singular scene that passed between Geraldine and him last night. He shuns every species of conversation which tends that way ; and you know, we none of us have been much in the habit of pressing him to confide to us what he appears desirous to conceal. I sometimes imagine his meaning is, in fact, no secret to me ; and, at other moments, the

conjectures I form, strike me as being so wild and improbable, that I do all in my power to chase them from my thoughts.

Adieu, my dearest Augusta. Heaven knows when I shall have any better news of our separated lovers to send you. Here, for the present must break off my so-long-kept-up journal, since you will not, I think, expect me to write an account of the tender dialogues I may soon be engaged in myself. Adieu, dearest sister.

Ever yours,

JULIA LESMORE.

LETTER XII.

GERALDINE FAUCONBERG TO MADAME DE ST.
HERMINE.

Dearest Madam,

Howel Park,
Jan. 7.

EVERY thing around me is so new and strange—the scenery we have passed through was so romantic, in many instances so magnificent and sublime, and the feelings I have experienced since our arrival at this gloomy and insulated habitation, have been of so mixed and undefinable a nature, that I seem to be transported into a different world. On the road, astonishment, admiration, and sometimes a sort of melancholy awe, held my mind perpetually upon the stretch. We travelled through rocky, silent, dark, and narrow vales, fit situations for the abode of criminals condemned to solitary confinement. Often, in such desert spots, surrounded by black and barren mountains—no sound reaching

our ears, save that of the howling gust, or of some unseen, but impetuous waterfall, dashing with headlong fury down a rough and stony precipice; often did it occur to me, that had I been guilty of any great enormity, these would have been scenes to have heightened remorse into despair and phrensy!—But I am so wholly unaccustomed to landscapes of this grand and solemn nature, that their impression upon my spirits could not fail to be extraordinary; indeed, it was forcibly assisted by the turbulence of the weather; the wind, in some of the narrow passes of the mountains, blew almost a hurricane, and its hollow roarings reverberated with so tremendous a noise amongst the rocks, that it was impossible to hear the sound of our own voices; torrents of rain at other times descended, mixed with large hailstones, which beat against the carriage glasses with a violence that threatened to shatter them into a thousand pieces. Neither drivers nor horses, so blinded were they by the “pelting storm,” could discern their path; and we crept on at a cautious foot-pace, nearly stunned by the

uproar around us, and, as I apprehended, in imminent peril of being blown from the unfenced road, down the steep declivity that, within a few yards of our vehicle, seemed yawning to receive us! I forbore all expressions of alarm; but my countenance, I doubt not, was too faithful an interpreter of my feelings, for my uncle reproached himself continually for having exposed me to so tempestuous a hurly-burly; yet he assured me there was no real danger, though the next minute, if a fresh burst of wind thundered in our ears, he again execrated his own cruelty, and declared these were regions, which, at this season of the year, were fitter for the revels of demons, than the resort of timid females!—To appease his agitation and self-condemnations, I was compelled to affect a courage, just then, far from my nature, and even to assume an appearance of cheerfulness. As for Jane, and my uncle's man, in the chaise behind us, and poor Cæsar, exposed on horseback to all the fury of the elements, I found afterwards, that their imaginations, lending no additional terrors to the

scene, they had borne it with the most perfect composure. I have often heard it observed, that the fears of the uneducated and the cultivated seem to be of as distinct a class as their stations and habits : what almost annihilates the former with horror, scarcely produces in their superiors any inclination but to smile ; and what excites our utmost consternation, or, at least, anticipated dread, is thought of by them with complete indifference, or, yet oftener, wholly disregarded.

In one of the pauses of the blast, my uncle let down the front glass to question our postillions as to their opinion of the duration of the storm ; and after they had answered his inquiry, we were informed, by way of comfort, that from the mountain we were at that moment passing, not long since, a huge fragment of rock (and of such only, and loose stones, it seemed to consist), detaching itself with a hideous crash, had rolled irresistibly down, shattered the road in its tremendous progress, and then tumbled furiously into the precipice beside us. Providentially, no living creature was encountered by this formidable

mass in its awful career: but imagine the sensations with which, after listening to such a recital, I reflected upon our vicinity to so threatening an object! The wind too, rising again with frightful vehemence—the hazy, scowling, and perturbed sea, forming a gloomy feature in the prospect, and every thing indicating the approach of a dark, boisterous, and unfriendly night. I can now laugh at my panic, but never felt so little disposed to mirth, as whilst stealing, from time to time, a shuddering glance at the frowning neighbour, upon whose caprice our fate, I thought, depended. My uncle, shocked to have called forth, in my hearing, an account that tended so greatly to aggravate every sinister idea already afloat in my brain, drew up the window, almost in a passion, swearing the postillion was either a fool or a brute! I took no pains to defend him; but, as if hoping, by my own stillness, to avert the impending danger, sought to shrink into myself; and scarcely ventured even to breathe or speak, lest the downfall of the overhanging crag, should be accelerated by the faint percussion

of my voice, or the feeble influence of my respiration. Yet, in the midst of all this tremour, and, perhaps, unreasonable apprehension, I experienced an emotion of pleasure that almost compensated to me for what I had previously endured. Peeping down at us, from a lofty and insecure projection of the rugged mountain, I descried a beautiful white goat, the first we had seen in Wales—his beard and shaggy coat blown about by the wind in so picturesque a manner—his position so elevated and so perilous—his attitude so graceful, and his appearance so appropriate to the surrounding scenery, that, forcibly impelled to recollect *where* I was, every poetical idea, every sentiment of interest and enthusiasm connected with the remembrance of what I had either read or heard of the venerable country we were traversing, took instant possession of my exalted imagination. I looked eagerly at the agile and adventurous animal as long as it was possible to discern him; and recalling to mind the descriptions in *Caractacus*, the sublime ode of Gray, and whatever history may have

taught me of the traditions of ancient Cambria, I almost expected to behold a long train of white-robed bards “wind down the steep,” striking their harps, and uniting their voices, “in dreadful harmony,” to the ravings of the sweeping blast.—No such impressive spectacle, however, presented itself; and we pursued our “toilsome march,” uncheered by the appearance of any second object, that could amuse the fancy, or beguile the tediousness of the way.

At the post-house (for it scarcely deserved to be called an inn), where, as day was closing, we stopped to change horses, my uncle determined to remain for the night. It was a miserable place, and nothing but the pusillanimity I had involuntarily betrayed, would perhaps have induced him to rest satisfied with the wretched accommodations it appeared likely to afford.—However, the people of the house were civil and obliging: our distance from Howel Court still exceeded the amount of twenty miles; we were all more or less harassed, either in body or mind; and the sight of a hot supper, which was pre-

pared with greater expedition than we expected, and spread upon a clean table-cloth, near an excellent fire, completely reconciled us to our situation. But just as we had sat down to it, I heard, at the room door, the sound of a rich and full-toned harp. A harp in Carnarvonshire could not but revive many of the flighty, and, if I may call them such, classical ideas, which had so lately occupied my fancy. I entreated the performer and his instrument might both be admitted; the former was not sufficiently venerable in his appearance to satisfy all my high-wrought notions of minstrels of former days: but he had his share, if not of inspiration, at least of fire and expression; played with skill, and admirable facility; loves his art, and gave us, from memory, such a succession of old national tunes, some spirited and quick, others plaintive, others dignified and martial, as was truly wonderful. His being in that spot was accidental; he usually resides at Conway, but often travels, and had lately been at some gentleman's house on an occasion of festivity: but the storm overtaking him on his re-

turn to his family, like ourselves, he had judged it wisest and best to seek shelter in the first house of public accommodation that presented itself. He performed to us all supper-time, equally, as it appeared, to his own satisfaction and ours. His figure, though clothed in garments coarsely patched, was interesting; the upraised attitude of his head, whilst playing, was singularly well adapted to convey the idea that he rather invoked assistance from imagination than memory; the form of his harp was elegant, and its size and ornaments so extraordinary, that I asked him how he could bear to expose so valuable an instrument to all the hazards attending his wandering mode of life? He said, that when well fenced from the weather by a woollen covering, and slung across his back, it had never materially suffered; and was so preferable to any other he had ever touched, that he could not endure to let "the quality" hear him disgrace himself by performing on one of an inferior tone. Highly gratified by the entertainment he had afforded us, we dismissed him, with many encomiums, thanks, and

some more solid proofs of approbation : and soon afterwards I retired to bed, much soothed by the well-timed exertions of so tuneful a visitor.

I will not weary you, dearest madam, with descriptions of the route we pursued on the succeeding day, but hasten to inform you, that setting out at leisure, in cold, but clear and tranquil weather, we reached Howel Court without any fresh alarm, about three o'clock in the afternoon.

The approach to this ponderous edifice, is through a noble wood of mingled pines, larch, and birch-trees. It stands upon the declivity of a steep hill ; but though high, and covering a considerable extent of ground, is wholly invisible till the carriage drives close up to the door. Its first effect upon the eye, from its secluded situation, and massive construction, is almost undefinable. There is nothing in its appearance that can strictly be called Gothic—certainly nothing modern—and yet less, any pretensions to Grecian elegance. Were I to say, what it seemed to me most to resemble, it would be the descriptions or

views that have been occasionally published, of a heavy, solitary, and dismal monastery on the borders of a German forest. Every thing around it is dark, and wears the aspect of age, without the dignity of antiquity; no elevation of sentiment can be produced by the contemplation of such a structure; it belongs to no peculiar period—is of no decided order of architecture, but, like a lumbering folio printed in black letter, and composed by a dry and dull author, upon an uninteresting subject; claims respect only from its bulk; but neither ranks amongst works of classical times, nor is valued for its merit as a recent production.

The noble owner of this unenviable mansion received us at the door of a spacious hall, which, in summer, is used as a sitting-room, but at this season serves only as an ante-chamber to a magnificent library, neither cheerful nor light, but perfectly warm, and very conveniently fitted up. Beyond it is a drawing-room, the walls of which are covered with family pictures; the upper panes of the windows are of stained glass; the doors

mahogany, grown almost black by time; the furniture is unwieldy and tasteless; and the general appearance of the apartment, corresponding with all I had hitherto seen, gloom-inspiring and oppressive.

The courteous benignity, however, with which our venerable host addressed us, almost reconciled me, in a few minutes, to his house, its approach, and its formidable grim woods. He surveyed me with a serious, but not embarrassing, attention; spoke to me in an accent equally mild and encouraging; and listened to what I answered with such complacency, that I began to think, if the superior of every convent was as gentle and prepossessing as our present recluse, the fashion of entering into religious communities would cease, even in this country, to be obsolete.

After we had taken some refreshment, and thoroughly recovered, by the glow of a resplendent fire, from the benumbing effects of the cold to which we had been so many hours exposed, Lord Glenoswald apologized for leaving me a few moments alone, and requested Mr. Archer would accompany him into

his son's study. I knew this son had been extremely out of health, and therefore thought the precaution of introducing the new comers to him singly, equally judicious and natural. The gentlemen retired together; and I then looked around in order to select from the multitudes of volumes I saw collected, one that promised to afford me entertainment: but scarcely had I read half a dozen pages when my uncle returned, and told me Mr. Glenoswald was coming to pay his respects to me before dinner. I heard the intelligence, of course, with great tranquillity; but could not avoid observing that, after having communicated it, Mr. Archer began traversing the apartment with an air that appeared to me full of anxious suspense and inquietude. I had worn, throughout the journey, a veil as a slight preservative from the sharpness of the air: this had fallen back, and I was upon the point of throwing it entirely off; but he desired me not only to keep it on, but even directed me to bring it forward over my face. There were Venetian blinds to the windows, two of which he himself drew down; and, at

last, went so far as to place a great screen between me and the fire; less for the purpose, I am persuaded, of defending me from its heat, than of shading me from its blazing light. All these precautions, I own, astonished and perplexed me; I felt convinced they were by no means causeless, since my uncle is the last man in the world who would trouble himself about such minutiae without adequate motives—but of what nature those motives could be, it was wholly impossible to divine; and I soon became almost afraid to learn.

At length Lord Glenoswald re-appeared, followed by a tall, thin, yet dignified figure, whose features, owing to the premeditated obscurity in which the apartment had been involved, I could scarcely distinguish; but whose graceful bow as he advanced towards me, and the mellow sweetness of whose voice as he pronounced a short but well-bred compliment of welcome, instantly preposessed me very highly in his favour. I only returned his salutation, however, by a silent and respectful inclination of the head. The

little circumstances which preceded his entrance, had involuntarily impressed me with a timid and comfortless sensation: and I was prepared, I could hardly tell why, to expect something extraordinary; but nothing peculiar occurred. We all seated ourselves, and a calm, regular, and agreeable conversation took place, in which, though I did not immediately bear a part, I found no subject either for surprise or uneasiness. By degrees, I gained courage to utter a few words, which drew, both from father and son, an attention the most flattering: but what justly renewed my perplexity was the observation, that the first sound of my voice seemed to produce the effect of making Mr. Glenoswald start! He recovered himself, however, in an instant,—addressed me again, and the second time that, in an ill-assured tone, I spoke, listened with apparent composure. From that moment, till we separated to dress, I no longer experienced apprehension or embarrassment, but found myself beginning to feel for my new friends both attachment and confidence.

Jane, who was waiting to officiate at my toilet, in an old-fashioned, but large and handsome apartment, to the door of which our polite host condescended himself to conduct me, scarcely gave him time to get out of hearing, before she exclaimed, in a dolorous tone,—

“ Dear ma’am, what a forlorn, dismal, ugly, old place this is ! I declare I am almost afraid to move about ; and, ever since the park gate was closed upon us, I have felt as if I could sit down and cry for very melancholy ! ”

Jane had so exactly expressed, in her simple language, the sensations which I had myself experienced on my approach and first entrance into the house, that I was most cordially disposed to make every possible allowance for them. Yet I gently exhorted her not to give way to depression ; spoke highly of the two amiable inhabitants of the mansion, and asked her, whether it was possible, in any family, to behold more order and comfort ?

“ No ma’am, certainly ; the old prison is

warm and comfortable enough, I can't but allow ; and as for order, I believe there never is so much as a pin out of its place ; yet, for all that, both your uncle's man, Mr. Saunders and I, and even poor Cæsar, who grinned so merrily at the thoughts of being travelling footman—we have been so hipped and low-spirited ever since we got here, that I am sure, I think, if we stay a week, we shall be quite moped to death."

"No, no, Jane, you will become reconciled to it in a day or two : but shut that closet door behind you."

She prepared to obey me ; yet, prompted by curiosity, was tempted first to take a peep into the tiny apartment to which I had directed her attention.

"Dear, ma'am," cried she, much pleased, "there's a fire and a bed in it!—I dare say it is where I am to sleep, for the housekeeper told me I should be placed near you."

I then stepped into it myself, and congratulated her upon having so neat and snug a chamber allotted to her. Meanwhile, with exploring eyes, which nothing could escape,

she was examining every object around her, and, in the course of this inspection, discovering behind the head of the bed, a half-length picture in oils, standing with its face turned towards the wall, she eagerly drew it out, and exposed to light the sweetest portrait I almost ever beheld. It exhibited a female, apparently about my own age, dressed exactly as Vandyke has so often represented the beautiful Henrietta, wife of Charles I. The countenance was bewitchingly soft, ingenuous, and meek, without either insipidity or languor; the lovely blue eyes seemed to solicit kindness and affection—the bright chestnut ringlets that shaded the fair forehead, and hung lightly and gracefully on each side the face, appeared unaided by art, and gave additional charms to every delicate and truly feminine feature; such were the attractions, in short, of this most exquisite picture, and so admirably was it executed, that I could have spent whole hours in contemplating it. Fortunately, Jane was present to remind me of the progress of time; and, upon condition she would contrive to place the object

of my admiration in some commodious situation, where I might still have a view of it, I consented to let her begin the operation of dressing me. Whilst this business was performing, she made sundry remarks upon the strangeness of seeking to hide so charming a painting.

“ I am sure,” she continued, “ it is a million times better worth seeing than any thing else about the crazy old place; not but what the poor lady has rather a sort of look, which makes one think, that if she sat for her likeness in this house, she was not much fonder of being here than such a one as I should be: she does not seem a bit merry.”

Then, discontinuing her employment, and surveying, very attentively, first the portrait, and then me, the loquacious girl unexpectedly added,—

“ Do you know, ma'am, I have seen you, now and then, look so like this picture, one might swear it was done for you; not when you are in good spirits, and quite gay and lively, but when any thing has made you a little sad. The great painting of you over

the study chimney at Highgrove Park, would not put me a quarter so much in mind of you.—Its very odd!—I wonder who this lady could be. I don't think they use her very kindly, to put her pretty face in such an out-of-the-way, queer corner!"

Thus she went on, till having exhausted all her conjectures on this subject, a new cause of animadversion occurred to her.

"Is'n't it very odd, ma'am, that nobody has been invited to meet you here? I am sure we came far enough to visit the old lord, and the least he could have done, I think, should have been to get some lady willing to bear you company. What a fine time you'll have of it all alone, after dinner, in that great drawing-room, by yourself; without a soul to speak to, and nothing to be heard but the wind howling, and the rats running round the wainscot; and no music to play upon, nor nothing.—I declare, ma'am, I shall be quite in pain for you."

"You forget," said I, laughing, "how many books there are in the house; will not they afford me some relief?"

“ Books ! Lord, ma’am, I dare say they are all Latin and Greek ! How can you expect to meet with an amusing book in such a house as this ? Below stairs, I saw nothing but the *Whole Duty of Man*, and Mrs. somebody’s receipts for cookery, and how to make plaisters for burns and scalds, and cuts, and childblains !—But now, ma’am, your hair is done ; will you please to look at it ? ”

I complied, and discovered with surprise, for I had been too much engrossed by the picture, to observe sooner what she was about, that, with infinite elegance and taste, she had imitated the style of head-dress I had so much admired ; disposing my hair in such picturesque ringlets, and interweaving amongst it, so ornamentally, a string of pearls which had been packed up in my trinket-box, that had the very spirit of Vandyke directed her, she could not have shown more intelligence and skill.

“ Jane,” said I, “ it grieves me to demolish all this fanciful arrangement—but you would not have me go down, to a quiet family party, such a figure as this ? ”

“ Figure, ma’am! I am sure I never saw you look better in my life!—Why, there’s nothing odd or old-fashioned in this way of doing the hair: I have seen ever so many ladies dressed exactly like it.—Do, pray ma’am, let it alone, and put on your dark gown with the Vandyke points; and though, to be sure, there’s only my old lord and his son, who isn’t very young neither, yet, I dare say they will both admire it; and the first day, you ought to pay them the compliment of appearing a little smart.”

Half persuaded by her reasoning, after some debate, we came to a compromise; and on her consenting to let the pearls encircle my neck, instead of adorning my head, I allowed the ringlets to remain pretty nearly as they were; and even gratified her with permission to bring forth the “dark gown with the Vandyke points.”

Jane is at all times peculiarly ambitious about my appearance, and prided herself much, upon the present occasion, on her success in heightening my resemblance to the picture. I felt assured, such is the happy

diversity of style with which modern ladies dress, that there was nothing affected or whimsical in my adjustment; and, therefore, as soon as she had tied the last bow, or fastened the last pin, descended, without further contest or hesitation.

Upon the head of the stairs I met my uncle, just coming from his own room.

“ You are a good girl,” cried he, drawing my arm within his; “ my Lord and Mr. Glenoswald are gone down, and I am glad we shall not have to wait for you.”

He then asked me how I liked my bed-chamber: was exceedingly amused by the hint I gave him of Jane’s dismal complaints, and we reached the drawing-room door, which stood some way open, still laughing and talking with the utmost cheerfulness.

This apartment was now handsomely lighted up, and as I entered it my eyes encountered those of Mr. Glenoswald, who was standing near the fire, and who then, for the first time, obtained a distinct view of my face. He regarded me, during a short but fearful interval, with intense earnestness—

turned pale as death, staggered back to a chair, and, burying his face in his hands, with a faint but agonizing groan, fell senseless into the arms of his father, who had hastened to his support!

Never in my life have I been so much agitated and grieved! The look with which he surveyed me, no time can ever efface from my recollection: there was in it a mixture of heart-breaking woe, terrific wildness, and acute penetration, impossible to describe! The distress of his respectable father was scarcely less afflicting to behold; and the consternation of my uncle exceeded all bounds. The bell, which I had pulled with vehemence, the instant this alarming accident occurred, now brought two or three servants tumultuously into the room. Instructed by a signal from their lord, they gently raised Mr. Glenoswald in their arms, and followed, in silent sorrow, by the aged peer, bore him slowly to his own apartment.

A profound, and almost solemn pause, ensued between my uncle and me; so greatly shocked did he appear, I scarcely had courage

to address him ; but, at length, venturing to break the spell, I asked, in a faltering voice, what all this could mean ?

“ It means,” replied he, with an air of commiseration, “ every thing that is pitiable, every thing that would fill your tender heart with anguish ! Inquire no farther, my dear Geraldine ; you cannot give relief to the sorrows of this unfortunate man, and to explore into their source, would only be to inflict upon yourself unnecessary pain.”

I was silenced : but let me confess to you, dearest madam, that my pity and my curiosity were almost equally awakened ; and the anxiety with which I panted for an explanation, was heightened by the secret apprehension, that Mr. Glenoswald’s sudden indisposition was, in some mysterious manner or other, connected with my appearance. I cannot bear, however, to extort by importunity the confidence which is withheld, perhaps, by prudence, or restrained by a high sense of honour. I therefore spared my uncle all further interrogations ; and we waited

with mutual impatience for better tidings of the interesting invalid.

In a quarter of an hour, Lord Glenoswald, dejected, but calm, re-entered the drawing-room. We interrupted the excuses he was about to make, by eager inquiries after his son.

“He is better,” returned his lordship, “and restored to recollection, though languid and feeble. You will pardon his absence for the rest of the day; to-morrow, I trust, he will be in a state to enjoy, without a drawback, the pleasure of your society.”

Then, benevolently taking my hand, the kind old nobleman added: “This young lady is ignorant of our melancholy story, and I am well aware, my dear Mr. Archer, of your laudable motives for desiring that she should still remain so; but not to let her harass her imagination with a thousand vague surmises, allow me to inform her, that to the miraculous resemblance she bears to a person once dear to my son’s heart, but now lost to him for ever, she must attribute the overpowering

emotion, which, with such generous compassion, she has witnessed. Your voice," continued he, "whilst gaily talking to your uncle on the stairs—your face, figure, nay even dress, recalled to his memory, in such vivid colours, the image of her he so faithfully adored, that she appeared as if restored from the grave in all the lustre of youthful grace and beauty, at once to dazzle, astonish, and appal him! This, dear Miss Fauconberg, will, I hope, in some measure, account for and palliate my son's weakness."

"Ah, my lord!" cried I, extremely moved by the feeling manner in which he had spoken, "I can never cease to reproach myself for having, however unintentionally, contributed by the very dress you mention, to aggravate Mr. Glenoswald's distress. I discovered in the apartment to which your lordship conducted me, the picture of a lady, so pleasing, so captivating, and so simply yet elegantly habited, that I permitted myself, after my maid had endeavoured to effect some imitation of it, to appear before you nearly in the same attire. Perhaps that portrait represents

the very person your son was so devotedly attached to?"

"Is that the case, my lord?" earnestly inquired my uncle.

"I doubt not but it is," answered he, with a sigh. "I had given directions it should be carefully concealed; for my poor Basil, though once it hung in his apartment, and was the object of his fondest contemplation, has not now beheld it for many, many years. It was placed in the chamber assigned to Miss Fauconberg, to be removed from his observation, that room being remote from his, and having long been out of use. When I knew she was coming, I ordered it, however, to be put out of sight, and was firmly persuaded my directions had been obeyed."

To exculpate his own domestics, I then hastened to inform him where my prying little attendant had found it, and entreated, that, whilst I remained at Howel Court, it might not undergo any change of situation.

"Its sight has afforded me a degree of pleasure," added I, "which it would be almost painful to me to forego: I feel an inter-

nal conviction that the original of so sweet a portrait must have been amiable and deserving. I am sure I should have loved her?"

Tears started into my uncle's eyes; he took my hand, and, drawing me gently towards him, affectionately said,—

"You would, indeed, my Geraldine!"

"Did you, then, know her, sir?" inquired I, surprised.

He turned from me, as if unable to reply; and Lord Glenoswald, willing to abridge the conversation, rung, to order the dinner to be served.

Our meal, you will easily conceive, was grave and silent; and before the cloth was removed, our anxious host left us for a few minutes, to make personal inquiries after his beloved patient. The tidings he brought back were not unfavourable, and it rejoiced my heart to see a countenance, which inspired me with almost filial reverence, lighted up with a ray of returning satisfaction.

I had scarcely withdrawn a quarter of an hour, when his lordship ordered coffee into

the drawing-room, and, with my uncle, came thither to drink it.

During the evening he divided his time between his guests and his son, but not without providing for us ample sources of amusement. He possesses a most splendid collection of engravings, from pictures of the greatest celebrity, either on the Continent, or upon our own island. They are admirably classed, and enclosed within portfolios, which a servant brought to us, as we wanted them, from their recesses in the adjoining library. These so delightfully engaged my attention, that they supplied all deficiencies ; I neither regretted music nor conversation—scarcely any book would have tempted me away ; and when the hour for retiring was announced, I lamented that time had flown with such rapidity.

I will only add, that Mr. Glenoswald is better ; but reserve all particulars for a future letter.

Adieu, my dearest friend, my revered guide, my adopted mother ! Write to your absent child as speedily as you can ; tell her

your arrangements at Woodville are all satisfactorily completed; that you are well, and enjoying in its utmost plenitude the reality of that blessing, for which you so much envy our language the exclusive possession of an appropriate term—the blessing of *comfort*.

Adieu, most dear madam.

Yours with grateful and devoted affection,

GERALDINE FAUCONBERG.

LETTER XIII.

GERALDINE TO THE SAME.

Dearest Madam,

Jan. 13.

I AM more than reconciled—I am even become pleased with my situation; and hard indeed should I be to please, were the case otherwise. I can give you no idea of the unceasing kindness, the flattering distinction with which I am treated by our gracious host, and his truly amiable son: and I find it so pleasant to be thus favourably regarded by persons I myself behold with such respect and admiration, that without, I hope, being intoxicated by their partiality, I feel disposed to do every thing in my power to retain and cherish it.

The second day of our arrival, I saw nothing of Mr. Glenoswald till late in the evening. My uncle had a short interview with him before dinner; and his father nearly de-

voted his whole time to him. I own that, after breakfast, on this particular morning, I was at some loss how to fill up my hours. The weather forbade all idea of walking. My thoughts were too little collected, too little familiarized to the local novelties with which I was surrounded, to enable me to sit down and read with that unwandering attention, that tranquillity of spirit, which can alone give permanent interest to such an occupation. It was but too true, as Jane had observed, that the house afforded no instrument, save an old chamber-organ, in the hall, terribly out of repair; but which, had it even been better, could have been of no resource to me, who had never touched an organ in my life. I meditated upon all these discouraging circumstances with my work in my hand, but my mind wholly bent upon devising some pursuit better calculated to ward off (what I found fast creeping upon me) vapours and *ennui*, till the idea suddenly occurred to me of attempting, in water-colours, a reduced copy of the portrait I have already so frequently mentioned. This was a thought that appeared to me quite

luminous; reanimated, and even eager, I lost no time in preparing to put the plan in execution; and had scarcely traced the first rough sketch of my work, before I became so wrapt up in, so devoted to what I was about, that I lost every idea which was unconnected with the object of my application.

Hours passed away like minutes whilst thus pleasantly absorbed; and I was still toiling with indefatigable diligence, when my uncle tapped at my chamber-door. I entreated him to come in; and soon found that the principal motive of his visit, was to behold the very painting then before me.

He surveyed it a considerable time without uttering a word. Its sight appeared to affect him very sensibly, and I could discern in his undissembling and well-known countenance, a mixture of sorrow, regret, and pity. Yet when, with apparent effort, he turned from it, not a sentence escaped him that could betray the origin of such extraordinary feelings. He approved the correctness of my outline, encouraged me to proceed; and, just as he was quitting the room, added,—

“ Preserve the copy you are drawing with care. The time may come, my dear Geraldine, when you will attach to it greater value than you are aware.”

Left to reflect upon these words at my leisure, but without any clue by which I could unravel their meaning, I vainly perplexed myself in the endeavour, and finally resolved committing their solution to time, patiently to hear and see all the enigmatical wonders connected with this house.

In the evening, as I have already told you, Mr. Glenoswald joined our little party. I had been peculiarly studious to render my dress as dissimilar as possible to that I had worn the preceding day; and far from stepping officiously forward with congratulations upon his recovery, I held back, remained very quiet, and would gladly have shrunk entirely from observation. But he himself sought me out; the unfortunate resemblance which gave to me such undesired power over his feelings, rendered me of so much importance in his eyes, that I seemed to be the first object he had in view. Yet his voice, when he address-

ed me, trembled and almost failed him—his countenance was wan and pale—and, through the eagerness with which he singled me out, I discerned a sort of hesitation and fear, that proved him distrustful of his own strength to support my presence. By degrees the flutter of his spirits subsided; I scarcely raised my eyes from my work, spoke as seldom as possible, and, by seeming inattentive to his emotion, he was the sooner enabled to overcome it.

But insensibly, and I can hardly tell by what gradations, the reserve I had planned, and judged so salutary to his tranquillity, gave place to greater ease and frankness. Drawn into it by Mr. Glenoswald's own exertions, I engaged in unapprehensive conversation. He sat next me; his eyes were continually rivetted upon my face; yet this earnestness of observation, which from any other man would equally have confused and offended me, proceeding from him, excited no painful sensations. His was not the stare of heartless impertinence; it was the pensive contemplation of a wounded but a gentle spirit; it indicated, that the melancholy occupation

of retracing in the features before him, the resemblance they bore to the woman he had loved, was an indulgence which, however trying to his feelings, he came prepared to allow himself, and would deem it cruelty to be denied; and once or twice, when I had the unspeakable pleasure of beholding a transient smile illuminate his fine countenance, I rejoiced that by a vigorous effort to familiarize himself to my voice and aspect, the recollections they awakened were becoming less mournful and oppressive.

The air of youth which Mr. Glenoswald's figure retains, his face might have preserved in an equally eminent degree, had it not been blighted by adversity and ill health. His features are the most regularly handsome I ever saw; his eyes, though too often dimmed by sadness, are full of intelligence and expression, and occasionally beam with such touching sensibility, that they irresistibly force their way to the heart, and inspire, for their unhappy possessor, the liveliest sympathy, esteem, and regard. The influence of his voice I have mentioned to you before; it

loses nothing of its power to please by the habit of being heard ; but, at once grateful to the ear, soothing and impressive, captivates the attention, and gives effect, and even dignity, to every word he utters. His manners, though somewhat singular, from their extreme quietness, are, on that very account, peculiarly pleasing. His conversation, when his mind is serene, turns upon subjects equally various, elegant, and entertaining : he resided, during the early part of his life, some years abroad ; he speaks with correctness and fluency several of the modern languages, is deeply read in polite literature, fond of the fine arts, a rational and excellent critic, and blessed with such powers of memory as are extremely uncommon. With a man of this description, who disdained not to listen with indulgence to the common-place remarks I was able to make upon the instructive subjects to which he held, time could not but appear to fly : indeed, this second interview, spent almost *tête-à-tête* (for my lord, and Mr. Archer, sat at some distance, conversing upon wholly different subjects), much as I

had previously dreaded it, proved the direct reverse of every thing I apprehended ; and we parted such cordial friends, that I retired to my room with a heart glowing with delight at the idea of possessing, from whatever cause, sufficient interest in his eyes to lull, for a while the sense of his deep-rooted sorrow.

Before I quitted the room, Lord Glenoswald found an opportunity of saying to me, unheard by his son,—

“ You have effected more, dear Miss Fauconberg, towards the benefit of my poor Basil in one evening, than the whole college of physicians could have accomplished in ten years! Take my blessing and my thanks,” added he, “ and with them the paternal salutation of one who already loves you as his child.” He then, with a mixture of kindness and respect, kissed my cheek. My uncle bade me good night, and I hastened to my own apartment.

The succeeding morning was clear and frosty, and after breakfast, before I would resume the occupation of the preceding day, I determined to indulge myself with a walk. My uncle and Mr. Glenoswald were gone out

together on horseback; and my lord, shrinking from the idea of exposing himself to the cold, was already comfortably established, with the newspaper and some books, at the fire-side. I decided, therefore, in preference to wandering forth alone, to take Jane with me; and going up to my room, I immediately summoned her for that purpose.

She was extremely ready to attend me, and very soon frankly confessed the reason. Beginning with her usual exordium of, "Dear, ma'am," she added in the same breath,—

"It is so dull in the housekeeper's room, you have no notion! I am sure it's quite a treat to get a mouthful of air, and have anybody to speak to. Mr. Saunders, you know, ma'am, is a mighty reader; but one is never a bit the better for it, for he keeps all what he reads about to himself, and it mopes one to death to sit with a person who does nothing but pore, pore, over some thick book or other, and never tells one a word of the matter. Mrs. Gwyn, the poor old housekeeper, is a very good sort of old lady; but she is so monstrously asthmatic and infirm and full

of aches and pains, and, now and then, so cross with the maids, I am glad to get out of her way. My lord's man and Mr. Glenoswald's are both steady, serious sort of persons, with whom one can't think of having the least joke or fun; the butler is ill in bed with the rheumatism, the gardener is as deaf as a post, and the steward is an old married man. Now, only think, what a set of poor hospital folks for a merry young body to sit with all day! I declare, ma'am, if you have no objection, I had a great deal rather stay up in your room at my work, except only just at meal-times; for there I could sing when you was not in the way, or talk to your poor little dog, Romeo; and any thing would amuse me better than Mrs. Gwyn's dismal parlour."

I gave her full permission to establish herself in my room if she pleased; and then she went on to relate an anecdote of Cæsar, at which, in spite of myself, I was forced to laugh.

"The maids, ma'am, a poor scared set of wretches, who either can't, or won't speak a word of any thing but Welsh, and plague one to death with a gawky stare, and a tiresome shake of the head every time one asks them a ques-

tion, as if they knew nothing in the world but their nonsensical '*dim sarsnic!*' Well, ma'am, amongst these poor ignorant mawkins, there is one girl, the under housemaid, who would be tolerably pretty if she did not look so wild and savage, and go about, as I met her this morning upon the back stairs, nasty toad! without a shoe, or any thing but half a stocking to her leg—not a stocking worn out, ma'am, but one knitted without a foot, on purpose! I am sure it's a shame for a nobleman to keep such sluts in his house! Well, ma'am, Cæsar, who, I suppose, in his own country, was used to these slovenly ways, took it into his head to grin at this girl, and admire her extremely. But she, poor simpleton, who never saw a Blackamoor in her life, and can't understand a word he says, and, perhaps, takes him for the d—l, ran, whenever she saw him coming, as if she was bewitched, and trembled from head to foot if she only spied him at the distance of a hundred yards. I don't so much blame the poor girl, however, for that; because, certainly, a black is, at first, a very shocking sort of

thing ; and, you know, ma'am, if she never saw one before, and takes him for what isn't good, she's to be pitied for her ignorance."

I extremely applauded these candid sentiments, and desired her to caution Cæsar not to torment or follow the poor maid.

"Dear ma'am, it's too late to do that now ; but he has paid for so foolishly noticing her, and I don't think he'll ever venture to have any more to say to her. You must know, ma'am, he met her this morning, soon after I did, trotting along the cold stone passages, barefooted, and a basket of dust and ashes in her hands. She got close up to him before she was aware ; and to punish her, I suppose, for showing so much fear of him, he suddenly seized hold of her, and attempted to kiss her. Down went her basket, and lord, ma'am, I verily believed she would have brought you all out of the breakfast-room to know what was the matter ! She screamed, scolded, scratched, and clawed him, worse than you ever saw a cat claw a dog ; pulled handfuls of wool off his poor head, and was in such a bitter passion, that even after he let her go, and would

have been glad to sneak off, she continued to pummel and thump him with so little mercy, sputtering Welsh all the time, that Mrs. Gwyn, lame as she is, was forced to go and part them. Cæsar's face, when he was set free, was running down with blood in two or three places; his neckcloth was torn in tatters, one of his eyes was sadly bruised, and his silver shoulder-knot hung by a single thread to his coat!"

Though this *dragon of virtue* had defended herself with somewhat more vehemence than was, perhaps, strictly decorous, yet I could not be very sorry that Cæsar's impertinent gallantry had been so effectually repressed. Jane, I know, chuckled in her heart at the discomfiture he had endured; for, though by no means averse to him as a fellow-servant, and always willing to speak favourably of him before me, whom she considers as his patroness; yet, as an admirer, his colour and his jargon prejudice her so violently against him, that I dare say she thinks his presumption, in daring to raise his eyes to a Christian Englishwoman, little less than wicked!

On my return from this ramble with the prattling, but good-humoured, and, I believe, affectionate Jane, I shut myself up, and went on with my drawing till near dressing time; as industriously as the preceding day. In the evening, whilst employed in work of a different kind, Mr. Glenoswald had the goodness to read to me. He selected some of the most beautiful passages in Tasso; and gave to them, by the strong sense he had of their poetical merit, by his admirable pronunciation of the language, the varied inflexions of his soul-subduing voice, and the alternate spirit, dignity, and softness of his expression, an interest, a power of captivating the hearer, which few books, when the charm of entire novelty is passed, and yet fewer readers, have the power to excite.

How infinitely is it to be lamented, that a man endowed with talents which might have been so conducive to domestic felicity; with manners so insinuating; a disposition apparently so benevolent and kind; a person so elegant, and a countenance so noble and prepossessing, should be thus lost to society—thus ex-

cluded from all prospect of forming any connexion which might cheer the decline of life, and give to him a possibility of deriving his own happiness from the consciousness of contributing to that of another !

But I will not dwell upon these useless regrets; it will afford you far more pleasure to be told a few of the innumerable instances of considerate solicitude to please me, which Lord Glenoswald and his son are perpetually evincing. In the first place, apprehending that it must be irksome to me to be deprived, for so long a time, of all power of indulging my fondness for music, they have borrowed, from a family residing at the distance of some miles from hence, an excellent pedal harp, the only substitute they could obtain for a piano-forte, which they had vainly endeavoured to procure. I understand very little of the harp, as you well know; but I learnt from Julia to play a few song accompaniments, and, in failure of the instrument to which I am most accustomed, find considerable amusement in practising upon this. Besides, my performance, moderate as it is, enlivens and varies our

evenings, and gives pleasure to my partial auditors. In the second place, Mr. Glenoswald, by some means or other, has found for me a little, gentle, tractable horse, or, more properly speaking, poney; and upon this sure-footed and mild-tempered animal, I fearlessly scramble up hill and down hill, escorted by him and my uncle, whenever the weather is favourable for such excursions. In addition to these obligations, I found, last night, neatly arranged in my apartment, a small, but well-chosen collection of books, in French, English, and Italian, selected from amongst those in the library which were judged best adapted to my taste. Our truly hospitable hosts knew I was in the habit of sitting a great part of the morning in my own room; and, unsuspecting of the employment which there engrosses my time, were anxious to furnish me with the best means of beguiling so many hours of seclusion.

Is it possible to be insensible to these proofs of kindness? No, indeed: I daily become more attached to my indulgent friends, more desirous to make them all the grateful return

in my power, and more unwilling to quit a place I entered with feelings so averse.



January 18.

TO-DAY, when I went down to dinner, a surprise so unpleasant awaited me, that I have scarcely yet recovered from its effects.

After I had been a few minutes in the drawing-room, and had given some account of my proceedings since breakfast; for it had rained the greatest part of the morning, and I had not been out, as usual, with my two beaux, or seen any thing of them for some hours, Mr. Archer, looking at me, as he spoke, with a sort of scrutinizing air, said,—

“We have news for you, Geraldine; a visitor has just arrived, not wholly unknown to you.”

I cannot tell what possessed me; but the first idea that darted across my mind was, that this new guest must be Mr. Lesmore. Nothing could be less probable, no supposition less rational; yet, so it was, and under this foolish persuasion I hastily said,—

“Indeed, sir? And who is this visitor?”

“Our noble neighbour, Lord Litchmere.”

The name ran chill to my heart; I stared at my uncle, unable to speak, and my countenance, I doubt not, too plainly declared my feelings; for Mr. Archer presently added,—

“Why do you look so surprised, my dear? Is there any thing very extraordinary in the information I have given you?”

“I think there is, sir; Lord Litchmere appeared ill able to encounter the fatigue of such a journey, and at such a season.”

“His indisposition,” said Mr. Glenoswald, very seriously, “arises not from causes which either seasons can influence, or fatigue affect.”

This speech, and yet more the air with which it was pronounced, awakened such a train of extraordinary conjectures in my mind, that with the greatest eagerness I said,—

“Is Lord Litchmere a friend of yours, Mr. Glenoswald?”

“The only one,” replied he, mournfully, “with whom I have kept up the slightest intercourse for some years.”

Good Heaven! what were the sensations with which I listened to this answer! Do

you remember, my dearest madam, a strange, unconnected, but most afflicting story, Mrs. Neville once related to Julia and me, and which we repeated to you when she was gone? The pitiable hero of that tale, I now doubted not, stood before me. Every circumstance we had heard tallied exactly with the situation in which I had found him; the secluded manner of his existence, the attentions and solicitude of his aged father, the intimacy exclusively kept up with Lord Litchmere, the precarious and delicate state of his health, the melancholy which, at times, oppressed him—all, all confirmed the unwelcome truth, and sickening at a discovery so every way painful, I sunk, pale and trembling, into a chair!

“My love, my dearest Geraldine!” exclaimed my uncle, much alarmed, “what is the matter? What is it affects you in this unusual manner?”

I could not immediately speak, and before I recovered the power of articulation, Lord Litchmere entered the room.

Having been previously seen, and greeted by the rest of the party, I was, of course, the

first person he approached and addressed. Felicitating himself upon having the happiness of again beholding me, he inquired with anxiety after my health: expressed an apprehension, from seeing me look paler than usual, that the air of Wales did not perfectly agree with me; in short, was so polite, and evinced such solicitude about me, that I almost detested myself for the cold and distant reception I gave him. But, from the instant I heard of his arrival, my resolution respecting the conduct I should pursue with him, was irrevocably taken; and if he came, as I had but too much reason to fear, with the intention of renewing his former professions of attachment; with the view of applying to me for a more favourable admission of their faithful sincerity, I thought myself strictly bound, in honour, in integrity, to manifest to him at once, that he had nothing to hope. Guiltless, as I may venture to declare myself, of ever having treated him with coquetry, I felt absolved, whatever might be his sentiments for me, from all self-reproach. Before I was aware of his partiality, I conversed with him upon terms of un-

designing amity ; when induced to believe his affection was becoming serious, I sought to check it by reserve, and a more ceremonious mode of conduct. The accident and sufferings he incurred on my account, without changing the nature of my regard for him, softened my heart, and filled me with such concern and compassion, that I no longer had the courage to behave to him with the same frigid insensibility. I could not, indeed, have done so to a person I had previously abhorred. He has betrayed no inclination, however, to presume upon the interest and pity I showed for him; we have had, since the eventful day of his humble declaration, no private conversation; my manners have been resuming their but suspended formality ; and I had flattered myself he would, by degrees, detach himself from so ungrateful an object, and learn to regard his case as hopeless. This unlooked-for visit here convinces me my expectations were erroneous ; I am fearful it is the result of some preconcerted plan, to which my uncle himself has accorded his sanction. It will be a new and most distressing circumstance to

me to oppose any wish of a relation I so affectionately revere ; but, dearest Madame de St. Hermine, can I, ought I, to sacrifice the happiness of my future life to the too scrupulous dread of inflicting temporary disappointment upon another ? Lord Litchmere, in the character of a lover, always was indifferent to me ; he has, of late, become absolutely disagreeable : and the more apparent he renders his attachment, the less inclination I feel to give it an auspicious reception.

But what a house this will be in which to find myself beset by his persevering attentions ! If Mr. Glenoswald, his partial and confidential friend, the sad victim himself of unrequited love, the most persuasive and irresistible human beings ; if he, seconded by my uncle, undertakes his lordship's cause, I tremble to anticipate the conflicts to which I may be exposed ! Why did my uncle, hitherto so tenderly desirous to avert from me whatever could give me pain—why did he bring me to this now terrible house ? Was it to set before me, in the person of one of the men most eminently distinguished by nature, the direful


effects of female ingratitude? Was it to drive me, at the instigation of a timorous conscience, into an alliance my soul recoils from? Impossible!—my uncle never acted with such cruel premeditation; and I hold myself almost culpable for entertaining, even for a moment, an idea so greatly to his disadvantage.

But still my inquietude is inexpressible. The repulsive coldness with which I first beheld Lord Litchmere, and the gravity and thoughtfulness of my aspect throughout the rest of the day, very obviously appear to have excited the disapprobation of Mr. Glenoswald, as forcibly as the chagrin and mortification of his friend. Our evening had none of its accustomed charms; we neither read, conversed, nor regarded each other with the ease and cordial sentiments which have hitherto reigned amongst us; and all that gloom which my prejudiced fancy attributed to this retired abode when first I entered it, seems to be restored to it, and with aggravation, by the presence of its newly-arrived inmate.

I will write no more to-night: my thoughts are all imbittered, “out of tune, and harsh.”

Jan. 19.

I CANNOT fathom the principles upon which my uncle is acting. He denies being the instigator of Lord Litchmere's visit, for I have had the courage to question him, but plainly favours his, now acknowledged, pretensions. At the same time, he professes the most indulgent determination of leaving me to my option; assures me, he wishes by no persuasions to influence my choice, or hasten my decision; exhorts me to be cheerful; intimates that we are not all destined, in this state of trial, to attain the exact species of felicity we most fervently covet; looks at me with unexplained commiseration, sighs, and hastens to start another subject.



I HAVE this moment received a letter from our dear Julia. It has afforded a seasonable relief to my thoughts. She, at least, is gay and happy; and, when we are otherwise ourselves, we may yet derive a ray of consolation

from the knowledge that our friends escape the same disquietudes. Arthur Dudley is at Parkton Castle, and has been most cordially received by her brother. I was sure this would be the case; Mr. Lesmore is most affectionately attached to Julia, and one of the first wishes of his heart, I am persuaded, is to see her happy; and who else could make her so but the object of her spontaneous and unbiassed choice? Were no connexion to which I was averse proposed to me, and were I permitted to remain indifferent to all but those whom duty, gratitude, and the ties of blood entitled to my love, I could most contentedly reside the remainder of my life under my uncle's roof: but deliberately to marry without affection, presents so dreary, so heart-breaking, so lingering a prospect of irremediable wretchedness, that, without hyperbole, I had rather die!



Jan. 21.

NOTHING new occurs; we are all secretly watching each other; all dissatisfied, com-

fortless, and suspicious. I long to hear your opinion, dearest madam, of the awkward predicament in which I stand. I am too young, too little accustomed to contend with difficulties, to be left wholly, upon such an occasion, to my own guidance. I will do any thing you counsel, except give Lord Litchmere reason to believe I ever can accept his hand ! Shall I summon courage to seek an explanation with him ? Shall I supplicate my uncle to remove me from hence ? Shall I pursue my present forbidding system of conduct, or soften, if I can, its disobliging formality ? Tell me but what is just to others, without being cruel to myself, and I will obey you with transport !

Adieu, my most beloved and most invaluable friend !

Yours, *à toute épreuve*,

GERALDINE FAUCONBERG.

LETTER XIV.

GERALDINE TO THE SAME.

Jan. 23.

I CANNOT wait, dearest madam, though I designed it, your answer to my last letter. I have a scene to relate, which will call forth your tenderest pity for me, and which I can alone disclose to your maternal eye. Acquit me of having been too unguarded during so painful a trial; and forgive my previous reserve to you upon a subject every young woman must feel reluctant to discuss.

This morning, when I descended to breakfast, I learnt from my uncle, who regarded me with some degree of reproach, that Lord Litchmerè was too much indisposed to come down stairs. I expressed, what I sincerely felt, my concern at this intelligence, and stole an apprehensive look at Mr. Glenoswald. His countenance, if I may be allowed the

term, was portentous! It wore an air of gloom and solemnity that made me shudder. Whilst we remained at table he scarcely spoke, and very soon infected me with an equal degree of taciturnity. The moment I could, I sought refuge in my own apartment; but the aspect of Mr. Glenoswald pursued me, and filled me with a thousand undefinable terrors—a thousand sensations of vague dismay. I walked up and down the room, incessantly repeating to myself,—

“ Oh, that Madame de St. Hermine were here!—or, that I might fly from this soul-depressing residence!”

In the midst of these perturbed ruminations, I was startled, for, at that instant, my nerves were unstrung, and every sound alarmed me, by hearing a gentle tap at my chamber-door. I opened it, and Mrs. Gwyn, the housekeeper, informed me, she had been sent, with Mr. Glenoswald’s compliments, to request the favour of my company a quarter of an hour in the library.

“ Is he alone, then?” cried I, gasping for breath.

“Yes, madam; my lord and Mr. Archer are gone together to Carnarvon, and won’t be back before dinner-time.”

I trembled from head to foot, and had only power, as she closed the door, to stammer out, that I would wait upon Mr. Glenoswald in a few minutes, before I dropped into a chair, almost fainting. My very heart was sick; I had no apprehension of outrage from this unfortunate man; but a horror inconceivable took possession of me at the idea of encountering him alone, whilst his mind was in such a state of irritation. I was certain my uncle could have no suspicion of his design of sending for me when he left the house, and wondered upon what pretence he had contrived to remain at home. Irresolute—fearful of offending him by delay; yet, more and more reluctant, every moment, to descend, I, however, at length gained resolution to open the door, in part, determined to brave the worst! But then, hastily drawing back, I almost determined to send him word I was indisposed, and could not leave my room. With any one else, agitated as I was, I should infallibly

have done it: but though I feared, I also respected, and, I may add, loved Mr. Glenoswald; and these gentler sentiments conquering the panic occasioned by the first, I allowed myself no further time for deliberation, but springing forward, rather flew than ran down the stairs, and found myself the next instant in the formidable presence I had so much dreaded.

I can give you no account of what passed on my first entrance into the library; a mist seemed to float before my eyes; I neither heard, much less understood, a word he uttered: but I remember he placed for me a chair near the fire, into which I threw myself with the feelings of a criminal upon trial; whilst, willing perhaps to give me time to recover more composure, he strolled thoughtfully about the room.

After a mutual silence of some duration, angry at my own childish failure of all presence of mind, I cleared my voice as well as I could, and, with affected calmness, said,—

“ I understood, Mr. Glenoswald, you wished to speak with me?” “ I do,” said he,

approaching, and standing with folded arms, opposite my chair,—“ I do wish to speak with you, Miss Fauconberg, and upon a subject the most momentous and important. I address you not,” he continued, maintaining the same attitude, and fixing his penetrating eyes upon my face, “ at the solicitation of friendship, but at the instigation of humanity! I make no apologies for interposing in so sacred a cause; it commands my mediation, it occupies my whole soul; it ought, and, I trust, will, excite your most serious, impartial, and compassionate attention !”

I bowed, grew pale and red by turns, and no longer dared to raise my eyes.

“Start not,” resumed he, after a momentary pause, “at the interrogation I think it necessary to put to you ; but, setting aside all little, unworthy, female subterfuges, tell me, with simple, plain, and righteous veracity,—tell me, have you ever asked your own heart what would be its feelings, were you, by any voluntary act, to occasion the destruction of a noble creature’s health—the termination, perhaps, of his very existence?—or

worse,—oh, awful heaven! how far, far worse, the subversion of his reason!”

This was coming to a dreadful climax, and implied so inveterate a belief of my misconduct respecting his friend, that, in the ardour of self-defence, losing all fear, all consternation, I firmly, and somewhat resentfully, answered,—

“ I ought to have been spared the shock of so barbarous a question! Had it been deliberately addressed to me by any other person, I should have quitted the room without deigning to speak!”

“ Beware, beware!” cried he, his eyes darting fire, and his lips quivering with emotion, “ beware how you urge me, by too presumptuous a display of pride and insensibility, to speak daggers to your affrighted soul,—to rouse your dormant conscience, and open to you the pages of that tremendous volume, where the wrongs of the guiltless, and the crimes of their oppressors, are recorded in ever-living characters! Do you know, unfeeling girl! what the caprices, the culpable mutability of a nature such as yours,—do you know the ir-

remediable evils they may occasion? Tremble at your own responsibility!—tremble when I tell you, that by a system, such as you are now pursuing with the unfortunate Litchmere, I was myself driven to phrensy by your idolized, but weak or treacherous—mother!”

A scream of uncontrollable horror escaped me!

“My mother!” re-echoed I, wildly, “my mother! so baneful an enemy to your repose, and her daughter here!”—

I could add no more; but, sinking with shame for an erring parent, torn with compassion for her unhappy accuser, overpowered by the surprise of so abrupt a disclosure, I burst into a passion of tears, and, concealing my face in my handkerchief, sobbed with almost convulsive violence.

Mr. Glenoswald was awakened, by the sight of my anguish, to a sense of his own incautious vehemence; he hung over me with deep regret; and calling upon me in accents of piercing sorrow, of compunctious tenderness, said,—

“ Spare, spare me, thou precious image of the Geraldine I have for ever lost! spare me the sight of this agony, inflicted by my own ungovernable fury. Sweet girl! dear child of her my heart so vainly deplores, so fervently loved—Geraldine, dearest Geraldine, do not hate the once-betrothed husband of thy mother!”

His earnestness, and the supplicating softness of his manner, penetrated to my heart in the midst of all my distress.

“ Hate you!” repeated I, when able to speak, “ I scarcely know any being upon earth for whom I feel so profound an esteem, so animated an interest! My sorrow is unmixed with bitterness towards you, unaggravated by remorse for my own conduct. I am wholly innocent of the levity you impute to me; I never gave encouragement to Lord Litchmere’s passion; and —”

He interrupted me; but his expression had lost its terrifying energy, and indicated the most affecting gentleness.”

“ Geraldine,” said he, drawing a chair near me, “ mistaken, but, I trust, ingenuous Ge-

raldine—a passion such as Lord Litchmere has conceived, cannot have attained its present height without having been fed by some encouragement! He accuses you of no coquetry, he condemns you not in a single instance; but I know enough of the human heart to be convinced, that before you acquired such unlimited ascendant over him, you must, however unintentionally, have afforded him a glimmering, at least, of hope. And are we not bound to repair, if possible, even our undesigned errors?”

“At the expense,” demanded I, apprehensively, “of our whole future happiness?”

“Why should it be at such a price? Is not Litchmere irreproachable in character? pleasing in exterior? young? wealthy? high in honour and in birth?—Reflect upon all these advantages, ask yourself why such a man, a treasure and an ornament to society, a glory to his family, a blessing to his friends,—why he should, by causeless and unrelenting disdain, be enveloped in the same dark cloud that blasted, annihilated, overwhelmed all the early prospects of my joyless existence!”

“ I implore you, Mr. Glenoswald, not to draw so fearful a parallel. I never was the affianced bride of Lord Litchmere. I have broken no vows, dissolved no contract; and, though I grieve for his unhappiness, let me again declare, I am not accountable for its extent.”

“ It is very true,” resumed he, “ you have entered into no engagement with my wretched friend; but has your treatment of him been, upon every occasion, perfectly consistent? Have you never raised him to the summit of all earthly felicity by your smiles, then sunk him into an abyss of despondency by your reserve? Do you not, as I have learnt from your uncle himself, owe to him your life? Has he not endured for you equal mental and bodily torture? Is he not now bowed down to the earth by your unpitied rigour?—Oh, Geraldine! can you call yourself wholly blameless when such are the facts to be alleged against you?”

So impressive was his voice, so plausible were his arguments, that I began almost to think

myself the culpable being he represented; and the pang inflicted by so terrible, though transient, a desertion of self-esteem, nearly demolished my utmost fortitude. Dissembling my internal alarm, however, from the dread of putting fresh weapons into his hand, I said,—

“ The reproaches you address to me on his lordship’s behalf, might, with equal justice, be uttered in the cause of any other individual, whom vicinity, accident, or the social habits of a country life, had often presented to my view. The timely assistance he afforded me, I never can forget; and the penalty his generous gallantry brought upon him, I can never cease to lament: but I regard neither as ties that in honour bind me to unite my fate to his. Whatever I might add upon the subject, I fear you would misconstrue into callousness and ingratitude; you would tell me, that whether or not a service is conferred at our own choice; whether we are indebted for it to a friend or a foe, no false logic, no subtile distinctions, can absolve us from the

obligation we have incurred. I have no wish to be absolved from it; but the reward you solicit for your guest, is the last upon earth that a sincere well-wisher ought to desire for him. I could not make him happy! From the first hour of our acquaintance, my indifference towards him has invariably been the same; though I deny not, that there have been times when, pleased by his conversation, struck by the excellent sentiments he has discovered, or softened by his sufferings, I may have shown more consideration for him than, perhaps, he thinks consistent with my present repulsive behaviour. But is it so? Is it an unpardonable, or an unprecedented circumstance, to view the same man in a different light, when he aspires to become a lover, or only aims to be a friend? Were Lord Litchmere disposed to accept my esteem and regard upon the footing of a mere neighbour and acquaintance, he would again find me such, as at the most cordial period of our former intercourse he always beheld me, unreserved and cheerful. Tell him this, Mr. Glenoswald,

and tell him, it is the only answer in my power to make."

"Inexorable being!" exclaimed he, starting up with renewed agitation, "heart of ice! seeming angel, but implacable tormentor! Would you consign to *me* the delivery of so killing a message? No, no! you have phlegmatic tranquillity sufficient to stab your own victims! Aim but rightly,—murder not like thy fatal progenitor, by halves!—Destroy life and intellects together!"

He struck his clenched hands to his forehead, and, in frightful disorder, rushed to the furthest end of the room, and threw himself madly upon the ground!

I collected, at this deplorable sight, a degree of courage, the united offspring of pity and momentary forgetfulness of self, which I did not think was in my nature. Without raising any alarm in the house, I approached the spot where he was extended, and, kneeling down by him, ventured to take one of his hands. His face was turned from me, and but for the difficulty

with which I heard him respire, I might have concluded, from the immobility of his attitude, that he had ceased to exist.

In the softest whisper I pronounced his name,—implored him to rise,—besought him for his father's sake, to conquer such terrible emotion,—spoke to him with the affection of a sister, and shed over him, as a noble wreck, tears of unfeigned commiseration and regret.

This soothing treatment, in a short time, had the effect of producing a sensible alteration; the oppression of his chest subsided; his hand, clasped in mine, feebly returned my pressure; he half raised himself from the floor, and resting his burning head upon the seat of a chair, found, to my unspeakable consolation, a well-timed relief in giving way to an immoderate fit of weeping!

Meanwhile I never forsook my post, and it would have been difficult to say, whose distress appeared greatest. When somewhat calmer, however, he seemed perfectly

sensible of my patient assiduity : but was too much exhausted to thank me otherwise than by looks and signs. I assisted him in reaching a sofa—rang for his servant ; and then left the room, promising, at his most earnest entreaty, to return, when a little repose had recruited his strength.

The interval between the time of quitting the library, and the moment of descending again, was the most melancholy you can possibly conceive. The heart-rending spectacle I had witnessed, was rendered doubly wounding to my feelings, by the recollection, that the unhinged faculties, the irrecoverable shock given to the frame and mind of the sad being I had just parted from, were the work of my unknown, though, till then, tenderly revered mother ! I dreaded, yet was most solicitous to hear the particulars of her story : involuntarily, I more than half acquitted her ; it was dreadful to me to believe she had *designedly* wrought such fearful mischief ; it was almost equally painful to imagine Mr. Glen-

oswald, even in the midst of distraction, could unjustly cast upon her memory so foul a stigma.

The sight of her picture, placed in the most conspicuous part of my chamber,—of that innocent countenance, those dove-like eyes, that appeared gently to reproach me for the unfavourable thoughts that sometimes intruded themselves into my mind,—struck me with a sentiment bordering upon remorse. I stood immoveable before the silent, yet speaking canvass; large drops of sorrow coursed one another down my cheeks, and I felt them not till they penetrated through my garments, and chilled my bosom. I dared not, after what I had just seen, give way to any exaltation of fancy; else could I humbly have apostrophized the lifeless image; addressed it by the endearing name of mother, knelt before it, and even have imprinted kisses upon each mild, and now, to me, more than ever interesting feature.

Oh! how have I indeed learnt to prize the feeble copy my uncle so much encouraged

me to finish! You shall see it, dearest madam—you shall contemplate the placid and ingenuous face, whose expression so forcibly repels the idea of guilt, or even imperfection; we will survey it together: and if the heavy charges urged against her be proved to have any foundation, we will sigh in concert over so sad an additional proof, that this world holds nothing faultless!

Nearly three quarters of an hour elapsed ere I judged it advisable to fulfil my promise, and rejoin the poor invalid. I opened the library door with the utmost caution, unwilling, should he have obtained a few moments' rest, to disturb the salutary slumber. But though stretched, languid and pale, upon the sofa, he was not asleep, but kindly extending to me his emaciated hand, said,—

“Come in, sweet Geraldine, come in, and let me disburthen my full heart of the weight of gratitude that oppresses it! How could I ever, though in the ravings of despair,—how could I ever ascribe to so indulgent, so tender a nature, the odious

attributes of arrogance and insensibility? I view in you now, not only the fairest, but the most benignant and generous of human creatures !”

Extremely affected by such earnest praise, yet unable to give utterance to what I felt, I would have raised to my lips the hand of the too partial speaker; but he hastily prevented it, made room for me to sit upon the sofa beside him, and then resumed his discourse.—

“ You have made,” said he, “ a noble, a steady, and, I no longer doubt, a fair stand, against the harassing attack that has been directed against you. I am shocked at what I have occasioned you to suffer; but I read my forgiveness in those pitying eyes; and am well assured you are at once too gentle and too rational to retain of the paroxysms you have witnessed, any but a sorrowing and unresenting recollection !—Oh ! had your lamented mother, with the same softness, possessed the same fortitude to resist persecution, what torments had I been spared !—But we will recur to these har-

rowing remembrances no more; your patience and mercy shall not again be put to the trial: no, dear Geraldine, my present design is not to renew the importunities you have already endured, but to consult with you, as a considerate and judicious friend, upon the best measures to be adopted with regard to our unfortunate inmate, Lord Litchmere. You must pardon my bestowing upon him that epithet:—alas! he is but too well entitled to it! What is your counsel upon this interesting subject?”

“My kind uncle, answered I, “though I fear he now wishes for the union, leaves me entirely free either to accept or decline the honour Lord Litchmere would confer upon me. My decision, Mr. Glenoswald, is well known to you; and allow me to say, it is irrevocable. This, with all due regard to his lordship’s feelings, I think ought to be communicated to him without delay. I ask you not again, dear sir, to take the trying office upon yourself; Mr. Archer, or your revered father, if he would condescend to interfere in such an affair, might announce

to his lordship the event of the application that has been made to me; adding to so inauspicious a message whatever assurances of my esteem and gratitude could best soften and mitigate the unwelcome information."

My attentive auditor remained during a short interval wholly silent after I had ceased speaking, and seemed to be revolving in his mind some doubt, some suspicion, that had suddenly occurred to him. I trembled lest I had again too incautiously touched the string, whose vibrations rouse to fury all his dormant passions: but my alarm was speedily dispelled, and converted into an excess of confusion to which no language can do justice.

"Geraldine," cried he, earnestly regarding me, "your determined rejection of so unexceptionable a proposal, can have but one possible foundation—your heart is no longer at your own disposal!"

A blush, painful from its intenseness, involuntary and instantaneous, revealed to his keen and searching eye the long dissembled secret of my soul! Utterly con-

founded, overwhelmed with shame, already shattered by the repeated trials of so perturbed a morning, I sought to hide my conscious face upon the arm of the sofa, and was unable to suppress a fresh flood of tears!

“Dear and artless girl!” exclaimed he, pressing to his bosom one of my passive hands—“beloved Geraldine, how severely have your feelings all been put to the rack throughout this mutually grievous conference! Compose yourself, however; fear not to raise that modest and timid face on which the purity of an angel is impressed! Look up, my Geraldine, and say you can indeed pardon the indelicacy of my demand!”

It was long before I could acquire confidence to meet his apprehended eye, and yet longer ere I could endure to hear the discovery alluded to which I had so unfortunately made. Repeatedly I attempted to effect my escape: but he gently, yet vigilantly opposed it; soothed me by a thousand flattering and encouraging expressions; and when, at length, he saw me a little

tranquillized, ventured, with great diffidence to say,—

“Who, my charming young friend, is the distinguished mortal you have honoured with your choice?”

“Ask me not, Mr. Glenoswald,” I replied in an agony of renewed confusion, “ask me not, I conjure you! But let his name ever remain as great a mystery to you, as I would to Heaven were his existence.”

“Is his attachment unknown to your uncle? Does any invincible necessity involve his pretensions in obscurity? Answer me, dear child of my heart! regard me as a fond and anxious parent,—tell me why this concealment?—why, on his part, this suspicious silence, and incomprehensible reserve?”

Again the deepest blushes dyed my cheeks, and, sinking with mortification, my head dropped upon my bosom, and I found it impossible to speak.

“My dearest Geraldine,” resumed he,

after an embarrassing pause, “you amaze and alarm me!—Gracious Heaven! has any designing villain laid siege to your unsuspecting heart?—avowed sentiments to you which he dares not publish to the world?—sought to ensnare your affections, whilst meanly holding back the declaration, to your family, of his own?”

I could not support these humiliating conjectures! The truth, the fair and candid truth, distressing to me as its disclosure would be, I yet preferred acknowledging;—and in my eagerness to clear from such imputations the injured absent, I found courage to say,—

“Mr. Glenoswald, you neither know me, nor the man you have so precipitately accused. I should as much disdain a wretch who aimed clandestinely at my favour, as he would spurn the dishonourable idea of pursuing so vile a road to my heart! Completely to exculpate him, I am under the unavoidable necessity of implicating myself. No matter, I shall find no confession too painful, if it

enables me to represent an unimpeachable character in the light in which it deserves to be considered."

"I ought," said Mr. Glenoswald, "in strict generosity, to exempt you from the task you are imposing upon yourself; but the warm interest I take in every thing that concerns you, robs me of all fortitude to withstand the temptation you put in my way. Proceed, dearest girl, and relieve me from this irksome suspense."

I hesitated,—looked down,—knew not in what possible manner to begin; and at length, by an effort no previous undertaking in my short life had ever required, forced myself to say,—

"The regard, dear sir, whose avowal you have surprised from me, if reciprocal, is, at least, unavowed! No unworthy artifices have been practised upon me. My present sentiments, founded on the highest esteem for his character,—on a well-merited admiration of his superior and accomplished mind, have been the work of time, gradual intimacy, and progressive experience of his excellence.

We resided beneath the same roof nearly the whole autumn; he is the brother of my earliest and dearest friend; my uncle viewed him with peculiar favour; his own family united in their feelings towards him, affection to respect; all those who had longest known him, combined in speaking of him in the most exalted terms: yet was it by slow and imperceptible degrees my own sense of his merit took growth. Indeed, so utterly divested was he of all design upon my heart, that the early period of our acquaintance was attended, on his side, with undisguised coldness, neglect, I might even add, antipathy."

"Incredible!" exclaimed Mr. Glenoswald, with a look almost of anger. "And is it possible my lovely Geraldine can have condescended to throw away her invaluable affection upon a being so insensible?"

"Perhaps," said I, forcing a smile, "there are roads to some female hearts more secure than the mere beaten track of personal flattery, the long-hackneyed path of common gallantry. Mine has been

touched by indirect means,—by the accidental discovery of deeds of benevolence,—by unostentatious proofs of zeal in the service of friendship,—by the clearest demonstrations of a nature generously disposed to sympathize with the afflicted,—and by ten thousand unequivocal testimonies of a spirit warmly alive to the best feelings which constitute a truly amiable domestic character.”

“ Sweet panegyrist! Candid and irresistible pleader! You compel me almost to love the very man I so lately was most tempted to condemn and reprobate. But whence comes it, if not from imbecility or insolence, whence comes it that a being such as you describe, could slight the opportunities afforded him of insinuating himself into your good graces? Is he fettered by any prior engagement? Is he embarrassed in circumstances? Is he, by some powerful relation, deprived of the liberty of choice? To what motive, in short, can you attribute his silence and supineness?”

“ A thousand may be conjectured. My

own want of attractions; the view of Lord Litchmere's persevering attentions, hitherto never decidedly repressed; the previous impression made upon his heart by some other woman; and now, the too visible and undoubted loss of my uncle's regard."

"And how has he exposed himself to such a forfeiture?"

"By backwardness to accept Mr. Archer's kindness; unwillingness to profit by his hospitality; apparent negligence, and real avoidance."

"It cannot be long, however, since he was at Highgrove Park?"

"No, certainly; but he was invited some weeks before Christmas, to meet there, during the holidays, a numerous party, chiefly consisting of his own relations. He gave my uncle reason to conclude he considered himself engaged to him; yet, when the time arrived, neither came, nor, during a considerable interval, even wrote: at length there arrived a chill, constrained apology for his delay, which was followed, to our utter surprise, by his unexpected appear-

ance, the very night before Mr. Archer and I set out on our journey hither.”

“Was he aware of your intended departure?”

“Oh, no! The information affected him in the most poignant manner; never have I seen his firm and manly spirit so shaken; never have I myself been more touched by another’s disturbance!”

“Geraldine, my frank and admirable Geraldine! tell me,—and forgive the distressing plainness of the question—did he, on that night, by any expression, any look, evince a warmer degree of attachment than you had before suspected him of harbouring?”

The colour rose high into my cheeks at this interrogation, and, for a few seconds, I was wholly incapable of answering it; when a little recovered, I compelled myself to say,—

“I have, thus far, been too explicit, now to affect reserve: he *did* give indications of a regard the most sincere and animated,—blended however, and embittered, with apprehensions, regret, and self-reproach.”

“ A thousand, thousand thanks,” cried Mr. Glenoswald, “ for the modest, yet open, satisfactory answers my importunities have extorted from you ! Be assured, dearest Geraldine, I will neither betray your confidence, nor make an ill use of the information I have obtained.—Poor Litchmere ! It is indeed time to bereave him of the feeblest ray of hope ! Yet, with a heart wholly devoted to another, it is not to be expected you should prove propitious to his cause ; my pity for him, therefore, ceases to be mingled with disapprobation of you : on the contrary, I take your concerns under my own protection ; I will myself announce to Litchmere his inevitable disappointment ; I will exert myself to console and support him ; I will reconcile your uncle to his lordship’s dismissal ; and, from this day forward, if I can influence the course of events, no other grievances shall reach my gentle Geraldine, than those, already sufficiently painful, inseparable from a state of anxious, but, I trust, merely temporary suspense ! ”

Judge of my gratitude, dearest madam, to this most benevolent of men; for these re-assuring and generous promises! I was at a loss for expressions to paint my feelings: but he comprehended my looks; kissed my hand; smiled at me with even parental kindness; and recommending to me to go and tranquillize my spirits in the quiet of my own apartment, arose himself, and retired into his study.

And thus terminated a conference, which, however it affected me at the time, has, eventually, been of such infinite advantage to my cause. The confessions Mr. Glenoswald drew from me, the singularity of the predicament in which I stood will, I trust, palliate and account for; had I been capable of revealing the tenth part as much, in cool blood, even to him, I must have been lost to all sense of delicacy and decorum: but you, dearest madam, are too considerate and lenient to censure with rigour so involuntary an indiscretion.

I must defer till to-morrow what I have

further to communicate. Good night, my invaluable and dear friend.



Jan. 24.

I SAW nothing of my uncle yesterday, after the conversation in which I had been engaged, till summoned down stairs by the dinner bell. He and our noble host had not been returned more than half an hour from Carnarvon : they both appeared wholly unconscious of my interview with Mr. Glenoswald ; and embarrassed me extremely by the questions they asked relative to the manner in which I had spent my morning. Mr. Archer professed great regret at not having taken me with him on the little excursion he had been making ; said the roads were in a much better state than he expected ; spoke with admiration of the venerable remains of Carnarvon Castle and promised to go thither again, before he quitted Wales, expressly on my account.

Lord Litchmere remained invisible till the evening was far advanced ; he then only came down for about an hour with Mr. Glenoswald, who had dined with him in his own apartment, and never forsaken him the whole afternoon. I was shocked to observe his pallid and suffering aspect ; and after the first glance, scarcely dared raise my eyes to his face. Mr. Glenoswald was all kindness to me ; at least, in looks ; but he evidently sought, for his friend's sake, to avoid any peculiar display of cordiality at such a moment. I was certain from all I remarked ; from his lordship's studied reserve towards me, and from the increased dejection of his voice and countenance, that the subject upon which Mr. Glenoswald had promised to converse with him, had already undergone some discussion. This consciousness, and a crowd of reflections connected with what had passed in the library, completely disqualified me for the task of exerting myself to talk ; and even if interrogated, I scarcely answered more than a monosyllable.

We all retired early. At breakfast, this morning, Lord Litchmere was again absent; and, soon after I withdrew to my own employments up stairs, I beheld, from one of my windows, Mr. Glenoswald and my uncle set out together on a walk. My heart beat at the sight: convinced that I was destined to be the principal object of their conversation, how devoutly did I pray, that persuasion might hang upon the lips of my friendly intercessor? and that my dear uncle might be induced, without great reluctance, to sanction the determination I had avowed.

They were absent above two hours; but, at length, I perceived them, still in earnest discourse, returning towards the house. It would be impossible to describe what I endured till the moment my uncle's sentiments were made known to me: uncertain what Mr. Glenoswald had revealed, what he had held back; doubtful as to the propriety of having permitted him, upon any pretext, to become my advocate; a thousand times I bitterly repented my own unguarded, and, as they now appeared to me, reprehensible

confessions; and wished most ardently I had depended wholly upon my own long-trying influence over my uncle's affectionate heart. The image of him whose importance in my eyes, I had weakly been surprised into acknowledging, never recurred to me without exciting a sensation of confusion and pain; and so great was my dread lest Mr. Glenoswald should have assigned as a motive for my discountenancing the addresses of his friend, the secret partiality I entertained for another, that I worked myself up to the most tormenting pitch of inquietude, impatience, and trepidation.

It was not very long now, before I distinguished my uncle's step in the corridor leading to my room. I could scarcely breathe; and when he tapped at the door, instead of flying to give him admission, I kept him some moments waiting, ere I had strength to beg he would come in.

"Well, Geraldine," cried he, appearing not to observe my disturbance, "you have performed so incredible a miracle, that, henceforth, I may safely bid defiance to all

wonder! From the manner in which you can turn and wind the minds of men, I begin to suspect you have dealings with a certain spirit of evil report, whose assistance will procure for you the reputation of a witch: and, do you know, that, by no less a personage than Judge Blackstone, conjuration, witchcraft, sorcery, and enchantment, are declared to be punishable by the pillory!"

"Dear sir," said I, with affected unconsciousness of his meaning, "how have I incurred the hazard of being so roughly treated?"

"Are you ignorant, then, that by your syren—what shall I call them?—not artifices;—my Geraldine never knew an artificial thought!—but, persuasions,—aye, persuasions will do!—you have converted Lord Litchmere's most zealous advocate into a partizan for yourself? But, my dearest child, could you, for an instant, hesitate to believe, from my known and tried affection, that I should cease all opposition to your wishes as soon as convinced my own clashed

with your real happiness ? It required not the eloquence of Mr. Glenoswald to turn me from my purpose ; one look, one prayer of Geraldine's, would have been sufficient."

"Kindest and best of uncles !" cried I, gratefully seizing his hand ; " no distrust of your indulgence influenced me to intrust this negociation to Mr. Glenoswald's management. He volunteered his services ; and that I accepted them resulted more from a desire of testifying the confidence with which he had inspired me, than from the slightest diffidence of my own power over your benevolent heart."

" All, then, is well," said he, looking much pleased, " methinks it would have been a mortification I scarcely deserve to have found you doubtful of my tenderness, suspicious of my anxious solicitude for your permanent felicity. But we will say no more upon the subject ; Lord Litchmere is already apprised of your definitive refusal of his offer : he will bear the sentence, I trust, like a man : at all events, you will not be pained much longer by the sight of his

dispirited aspect; he quits this place to-morrow; no more to return to Rushley, but to rejoin his father and sisters at the family seat."

What unspeakable relief did this intelligence give me! I seemed, from the moment it was communicated, to breathe more freely; to behold every surrounding object through a clearer medium; to stand more securely; to step with greater elasticity! I was once again my own agent; and the value of the liberty thus restored to me, I never before estimated so highly!

After this, my uncle inquired into the particulars of my interview, the preceding day, with Mr. Glenoswald.

"Ah, sir!" I exclaimed, "it is a cruel scene to recapitulate!" I acquainted him, however, as briefly as I could with the subject of our *first* dialogue; and he appeared thunder-struck at the information! He had not the most distant idea that my mother's story had been thus abruptly laid open to me; he feelingly bewailed the shock I must have sustained; caressed and pitied me with

the tenderest affection; and was gradually induced, before he quitted my apartment, to give me the following connected details respecting the fate of the dear parent I so early lost.

The alliance she was driven to form by her father's self-incurred embarrassments, and the timid facility of her own nature, brought with it nothing but misery, almost equally insupportable to herself and her disappointed partner. Accident revealed to her, some months after her marriage, the dreadful state into which her precipitate connexion had plunged the first object of her choice; and from that moment she never knew an hour's peace of mind, never was seen to smile, never attempted to disguise the horror and remorse that preyed upon her soul! My father, a somewhat inconsiderate, but generous and affectionate character, doated upon her, in the midst of all her coldness to himself, her despair, and anguish, with a fondness that knew no diminution. He travelled with her from place to place, in the vain hope, by change of

scene, of alleviating her melancholy; he assembled round her, when at Woodville, the friends she had best loved; he anticipated all her wishes; he would have lavished uncounted thousands into her hands: but these indulgences, alas! were of no avail, to “pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow!” She died a lingering death, ere I had completed the first eighteen months of my existence: and my afflicted father, who immediately went abroad, was seen no more in his native country, nor even heard of, till intelligence was brought, five years after, by a favourite servant who had attended him in his wanderings, that he fell a victim to some epidemic disease in one of the Greek islands.

How disastrous a tale! and how impressive a lesson does it convey. Even my grandfather, for whose sake the unsanctified contract had been signed; even he, was, eventually, no gainer by the compulsive measures he had adopted. His son-in-law, when informed of the previous engagement that had subsisted between my mother and

Mr. Glenoswald, never could endure to see him again ; fresh debts and fresh difficulties speedily accumulated around him ; he was driven by creditors from the shelter of his own roof ; my uncle, whose fortune was independent of him, and who could, and would have assisted him, to any amount, he held, through some unaccountable scruples of shame or pride, in utter ignorance of his distresses ; my father was a voluntary, but wretched exile ; and, during his absence, the improvident and unhappy old man terminated his days in a house of arrest !

Thus prematurely or miserably perished, whilst yet I was an unconscious infant, all my nearest connexions ! Ah, dearest madam ! what do I not owe to yours and my uncle's unwearied tenderness ? Under your united protection, I have never felt the privation of parental love ; the happiest, as the most highly favoured of orphans, my placid existence has hitherto been one invariable tissue of benefits received, affection reciprocated, contentment unalloyed ! By

nothing but my present gratitude, can my past felicity be equalled!



Jan. 25.

Lord Litchmere actually departed this day at noon, and, by easy stages, means to travel into Devonshire; where, most favourably situated for him, is the residence of his father. Mr. Glenoswald, however averse to quitting this secluded spot, has promised to pay his friend a visit as soon as we are gone, and our time for remaining here expires in about a week.

To my indescribable relief, it was neither thought advisable, nor did Lord Litchmere himself wish, that we should meet again previous to his departure. My most zealous good wishes for his re-establishment went with him: but I could not affect an anxiety to express them verbally, I was so far from feeling.

And now, I look forward with joy to the prospect of speedily embracing you. We

shall pass one night, as on our journey hither, at Woodville; and I hope to prevail upon you, leaving your young housekeepers to their own management, to pursue with us the route to Highgrove Park.

Ever, with devoted veneration and love,
your own

GERALDINE FAUCONBERG.

LETTER XV.

THE HONOURABLE BASIL GLENOSWALD, TO FERDINAND
LESMORE, ESQ.

Sir,

Howel Court,
Jan. 24.

I HAVE not the honour of being known to you, probably even by name, for I have lived estranged from the world, and cut off from all intercourse with my fellow beings, nearly twenty years. The forms and usages of society are almost obliterated from my memory; and, in what I now undertake, indulging the impulse of feeling rather than consulting the dictates of ceremony, I trespass, perhaps, against every rule of civilized life. But my purpose is manly, upright, and honourable; and I have heard enough of your character to be assured, that little else is required to sanction, in your eyes, a yet more unwonted mode of proceeding.

You are not to learn, that the remote habitation from which I write, is at this moment honoured with the presence of the excellent Mr. Archer, and his beautiful niece. Will it give you pain to be told, I have been intrusted with the views formerly entertained by him in your favour? You start, perhaps, at the word *formerly*! But why? Have you not yourself caused the change? Who have you to accuse for the coldness that has, at length, reluctantly superseded the partial friendship he long entertained for you? What has palsied your tongue? restrained every exertion in your own behalf? rendered you an alien from the hospitable roof under which you were once caressed and honoured? Why have you inflicted mortification upon an old man's heart, whose fondest wish was to bless you with the gift of one of the best and fairest of the human race? Have you any other object in view? Blind, insensible, and undiscerning Lesmore! Are you so infatuated as to put in competition with *Geraldine* any of her inferior sex? To your cost, you will

one day learn to estimate her value; to rue, with pangs of bitter self-condemnation, the wreck you have made of your own happiness. Her sweetness of character, her simple and endearing virtues, her cultivated mind, her personal loveliness, her enchanting talents, all, all will arise in array before you, and make you the veriest wretch, that ever yet vainly struggled against the unfailing, though tardy pressure of conviction, or writhed beneath the lash of fruitless but keen regret!

If the assiduities of Lord Litchmere have been any obstacle to your pretensions; if the explicit avowal of an attachment Mr. Archer confesses to have seen a thousand times emanating from your eye, and trembling on your lips, has been repressed by a proud disdain of contending with a rival, your fastidious delicacy may now be appeased. Lord Litchmere is a rejected man: he undertook a journey hither, he humbly preferred his suit, and has, at once, been deprived of every vestige of hope. Tomorrow he quits this scene of disappoint-

ment. With shattered nerves, and an almost broken heart, he makes way for some more favoured successor, some happier, but surely not more deserving, admirer.

Now Mr. Lesmore, allow me earnestly to adjure you, if ever you design to become an acknowledged condidate for Miss Fauconberg's regard; if, indeed, you experience for her the attachment her uncle surmises, I adjure you, for your own sake, to seize the present moment; to discard all reserve; to humble yourself to her justly-offended, but still placable, guardian; to exert every power of persuasion with which nature may have gifted you, to obtain her consent and approbation; to secure happiness for yourself, and gratefully to become its dispenser to all within your influence!

Need I protest, on the word of a man of honour, that this letter is written wholly without the knowledge or participation of our valued guests? You can never suppose Mr. Archer could so much degrade himself, or undervalue his incomparable ward, as to descend to remonstrances and supplications

of the nature I have ventured to address to you. As a mediator, a friend, if you will permit the expression, to both parties, I have deemed myself justified in taking this extraordinary step; the very man you have incensed and irritated, has taught me to respect your general character; and Lord Litchmere, long since, blazoned to me your worth. I therefore, without any personal acquaintance, feel as if I knew you. Long experience of its reverse has instructed me in the value of domestic felicity; I grieve to see its possible attainment slighted; and to the disinterested motives that have dictated this interference, confidently intrust its vindication.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

BASIL GLENOSWALD.

LETTER XVI.

GERALDINE TO MADAME DE ST. HERMINE.

Howel Court,
Jan. 27.

Dearest Madam,

A BRIGHT and cheerful morning tempted my uncle, after breakfast to day, to propose putting in execution the plan he had formed of taking me to visit Carnarvon. Mr. Glenoswald chose to accompany us, and, as soon as the carriage could be prepared, we set out.

The first place we stopped at, in Carnarvon, was an inn, where we were extremely glad to procure refreshment, and to enjoy the warmth of a reanimating fire. Immediately afterwards, we committed ourselves to the guidance of Mr. Glenoswald, and sallying forth, walked through the town to the castle.

In the course of our peregrination, I was rendered somewhat indignant to observe,

that, amongst the various shops contained in so large and well inhabited a place, not one bookseller's shop was to be seen*; and though it was early in the day, it appeared to me, that the number of intoxicated boatmen exceeded the amount of all the sober citizens we met: but, as my uncle justly observed, on hearing me make this remark, it is indisputably true, that a very few drunken persons make so much more bustle and noise than thrice the number of sober ones, that wherever you encounter them, they always appear to be the majority.

The object of our excursion, the Castle, though not habitable, is in far better preservation than I expected. It was built by the great,—oppressor, shall I call him, or—conqueror, of the Welsh? Edward I. and is a grand and magnificent structure. Over the principal gate is a rough, and nearly defaced statue of its royal founder, holding a dagger in his hand—a harsh emblem! I should have preferred the olive branch. We clambered almost to the top of what is

* This was the case in 1805.

alled the "Eagle Tower," to look at the walls of the room (now unfloored and unroofed) in which, it was said, the weak and wretched Edward II. was born. From connecting with it the remembrance of his virtuous mother, the faithful Eleanor of Castile, I beheld it with some degree of veneration, and was baby enough to bring away with me, as a relic, a small sprig of the ivy that adheres to its sides.

I shall spare you any further description. I am no connoisseur in architecture, and scarcely understand the proper meaning of half the terms used in speaking of Gothic buildings; I look at such objects with interest simply on account of the historical collections they awaken: were I to plunge so deeply into the subject, I should make many blunders as if giving a lecture upon fortification: and the fact is, that most of these old castles were erected in such hostile times, that their uses appear to have been far more directed to the purposes of war than the comforts of peace.

After quitting this extensive ruin, we

walked upon the quay a considerable time, and enjoyed a fine view of the river Menai, just before it unites itself to the Irish sea. We then returned to our inn; and when the horses were sufficiently rested, retraced our steps to Howel Court.



Jan. 30.

The surprises I am doomed to experience in this house will know no end!

After a busy, yet sedentary morning, I was walking in the plantations with Jane, about two hours before dinner, when we descried through the trees, a chaise and four horses, steaming with heat, driving with velocity towards the house. I had but a momentary glimpse of the quick-moving vehicle; yet, on some occasions, so clear and rapid are our powers of perception, that we seem less indebted to natural sagacity, than to some sudden and marvellous gift of divination. I saw not the person who was within the chaise; I had no time to distinguish the arms; yet its colour and

form instantly told me it belonged to Mr. Lesmore! Ah, my dearest Madam! for a few dreadful minutes, what a tumult of confusion and shame did this conviction bring with it! I believed that Mr. Glenoswald, false to his trust, had betrayed the weakness of my heart; that Mr. Lesmore was come, impelled by a sense of honour, to terminate my suspense: to declare to us, that he was no longer at liberty; that his election was made, and his vows irrevocably pledged to another! Or—oh, yet more insupportable thought! induced by pity, that he was come to offer me his reluctant hand, come to destroy, rather than confer obligation upon me by the forced tender of his regard!—I am ashamed to own it; but whilst these odious conjectures held possession of my thoughts, I was like a being half frantic! I abruptly dismissed my astonished attendant, and plunging into the thickest part of the dark grove near which we had been wandering, leant my head against a tree, and wept with uncontrolled bitterness.

The vehemence with which my tears

flowed, accelerated, perhaps, the dispersion of the distrustful, proud, and indignant feelings, so foreign, I hope, to my general character. I began, by degrees, to reflect upon the solemn assurances Mr. Glenoswald had given me of his inviolable discretion; I reproached myself for the injustice with which I had been so ready to accuse him; I became sensible of the little probability there was that Mr. Lesmore would undertake such a journey for the sole purpose of informing my uncle he was already engaged; and I, at length, became cool enough, arguing from my own rejection of Lord Litchmere, to despise the folly which had, for a moment, induced me to imagine, Mr. Lesmore was the sort of man who would ever bind himself, from motives of mistaken compassion, to a woman he did not love!

Calmed by these more rational considerations, I was able in a little time, to direct my steps towards the house. But though chilled by long exposure, whilst standing quite inactive, to the bleak and hazy air, I

determined not to make my appearance at the front door, and took a considerable round to get in by the offices, and steal unobserved to my own chamber.

In a few minutes I was joined by the talkative Jane—

“Dear, ma’am!” exclaimed she joyfully, “I am so glad you are come in! I have been twice up here to look for you! for I thought you would catch your death of cold, such a nasty, damp fog, as is coming on!”

“Has any body inquired for me, Jane?”

“No, ma’am, not that I know of: but would you believe it, ma’am? Mr. Lesmore is here! It was he we saw driving up so furiously, and his servant says they have been travelling in that way, just like mad, half the night! I declare he was in luck not to break his neck along these bad roads: to be sure there is a bit of a moon; but for all that, only think of tearing away, at such a rate, in places so wild as these!”

“Who has seen him, Jane?”

“Why, *I* have, ma’am, for one. I came

past Mr. Glenoswald's study windows, and just took a little peep from the corner of my eye, and saw my two gentlemen standing together at the chimney, in close talk. Nobody else was with them; and I a'n't sure my lord and Mr. Archer know anything yet of his arrival; for he asked only for Mr. Glenoswald, and was shown directly to his room."

To prevent any further conversation, at that moment, I sent her down stairs under pretence of wanting a light; and, on her return, appeared so eager to go on with a book I had just taken up, that she thought it advisable to set out my things for dressing, in perfect silence.

The apparent tranquillity I had assumed, and, in some degree, obtained, was, at length, effectually put to flight by the sound of my uncle's cough upon the stairs, and the approach of his footsteps along the passage. He presently gave the accustomed signal at my door, which, having first desired Jane to retire for a few moments into the closet where she sleeps, I

opened with a palpitating heart, and asked him to come in.

“No;” said he, “I am going to dress: but here is a letter for you, which Ferdinand Lesmore has brought from his sister Julia. I suppose you know he is in the house; and will not be sorry to hear, I have taken him into favour again. He is a good fellow, after all.” Saying this, he put the letter into my hands, and closing the door, retired without waiting for an answer.

With what impatience I flew to the candle to read the welcome lines, which, I expected, were to explain to me the whole mystery of Mr. Lesmore’s journey, need not be told! but judge my disappointment! this was all the cruel Julia wrote—

TO MISS FAUCONBERG.

Parkton Castle.

‘I cannot, my dearest Geraldine, suffer Ferdinand to depart for the very place you now inhabit, without confiding to his care a line or two of inquiry into your

recent proceedings. You have been most tormentingly sparing of all communication since the first week of your Welsh seclusion, and I am able to devise but one way by which you can possibly make me amends. Come to us for a week or ten days before you to return to Highgrove Park. I know you to be all-powerful with your uncle; the decision therefore rests with you. My mother writes upon the subject to Mr. Archer, *in form*: but we both trust to your influence far more than to her eloquence.

‘Lesmore impatiently sends to hasten this dispatch. I have only time to add, that I am, and shall ever continue, yours, with the truest affection,

‘JULIA LESMORE.’



What was I to infer from so laconic an epistle? Was ever any thing more unsatisfactory? I was really provoked; and had Julia been present, could, with pleasure, have given her an angry lecture. My un-

cle's speech, however, when putting this unmeaning scroll into my hands, afforded me much consolation. The friendly familiarity with which he had called the newly-arrived visitor, "Ferdinand," instead of *Mr. Lesmore*; his declaration that they were reconciled, and the approving sentence with which he had summed up the whole, all gave me the liveliest satisfaction; and I meditated incessantly upon these prognostics, till the moment arrived for making my appearance in the drawing-room.

I went down the last; my hand trembled as I put it upon the lock of the door; but collecting all my resolution, I endeavoured to enter with a steady and composed demeanour. Mr. Lesmore hastened forward to meet me;—so bright, so animated, was his countenance; such pleasure sparkled in his eyes, that they communicated to my heart a glow of unmixed satisfaction such as it has not often experienced. The tone of his voice accorded with his looks; it was expressive of the fullest contentment of

soul,—of vivacity amounting even to joy. Yet the flattering eagerness with which he addressed me, was blended with so much respect, that it neither embarrassed, nor tempted me to assume an air of reserve. Having made some inquiries after Mrs. Lesmore and Julia, I seated myself near my uncle, and at the end of a few minutes, was able to look up, with tolerable serenity.

As we were quitting the drawing-room to proceed to the dining-parlour, Mr. Glenoswald stole round to me and whispered,—

“The secret of your innocent heart, dearest Geraldine, has been most religiously preserved!”

He said no more, but pressing my hand, passed on.

You will easily believe, that an assurance so welcome, gave me unspeakable comfort, and tended beyond measure to confirm my wavering courage.

During dinner, it was impossible not to be struck by the revived cordiality of my uncle's manner towards his, so lately, disgraced favourite; by the friendly distinc-

tion he experienced from Mr. Glenoswald ; and the courteous and approving looks with which he was regarded by the venerable master of the house. He was seated next to me ; and was unremitting in his assiduities : but with a solicitude to avoid affectation or officiousness, that prevented my feeling any uneasiness from his attention. The conversation was general, and extremely cheerful ; and, to confess the truth, this was one of the pleasantest meals I ever remember to have partaken.

I was detained at table considerably longer than usual, or even than I wished. My uncle, himself, insisted upon my staying to drink, " Health and felicity to Julia and Mr. Dudley." Her brother bowed, and thanked him ; our two hosts filled their glasses at the same moment, and the toast was duly honoured by the whole party. Immediately afterwards I retired.

When alone in the drawing-room, I again perused the short letter I had received from Julia ; and was sitting at a table, with my eyes fixed upon it, meditating, not so much

upon its contents, as upon the strange circumstance of its being delivered to me at Howel Court by Mr. Lesmore, when, hearing the door gently opened, and some one enter the room, I turned my head, and started on beholding the very person who, at that moment, engrossed my thoughts.

“Do I interrupt you,” said he, “or may I avail myself of your uncle’s tacit permission to solicit the indulgence of a few moments’ audience?”

“I was endeavouring,” said I, speaking with all the tranquillity I could command, “to account for the conciseness of your sister’s letter.”

“Shall I,” resumed he, half smiling, and sitting down next me, “assist you in the task? When Julia knew I was coming hither, was it not natural she should conclude, you would refer to me for the explanation of whatever she had neglected to render clear and explicit? Tell me, then, Miss Fauconberg, what is the subject she has most failed in making intelligible?”

I felt myself beginning to grow extreme-

ly embarrassed, and after some hesitation, said,—

“ Oh, she has so completely avoided perspicuity in *all*, that it would take up too much of your time, now, Mr. Lesmore, to supply her deficiencies. You will be expected again in the dining parlour.”

“ No, I shall not! but though Miss Fauconberg refuses to question me, may I venture to interrogate her? May I ask her, what she can possibly think of the extraordinary liberty I have taken in daring to present myself, unknown as I am, before the masters of this house? Can she surmise any reason for such a breach of decorum? Can she pardon me, if I attribute exclusively to her influence over me, the impropriety of which I may appear to have been guilty?”

“ To my influence, Mr. Lesmore!”

He seized my hand, and with great animation added,—

“ Is it not true, Miss Fauconberg, that you have declined the addresses of Lord Litchmere? Is it not probable this most

interesting information would speedily be circulated? and when it had once reached my delighted ear, can you wonder I should break through every obstacle that seemed to interdict my appearing before you? Mr. Archer's recent alienation of regard, my being personally a stranger to Lord Glenoswald and his son, all, all were forgotten! I thought only of the transport of again beholding you, unfettered, disengaged! I could taste no repose till obtaining an interview, and committing my doom to your mercy, I threw aside the disguise I have so long painfully worn, and frankly avowed to you, at whatever hazard, the fervent admiration, the deep-rooted, and unalterable attachment, with which my whole soul is penetrated,—on which depends the fate of every future hour of my existence!"

You will not wonder, dearest madam, that, at such a moment, I could neither speak, nor disperse, entirely, the tears which started into my eyes. Mr. Lesmore saw my emotion, and eager to ascertain its cause, apprehensively said,—

“ Whence these indications of sorrow, my adored Miss Fauconberg? Speak to me, I conjure you! The profound sense I have of the past errors of my judgement, and the consciousness that incessantly pursues me of the various offences that so justly entitle me to your disdain and aversion, intimidate and depress me; I tremble lest these tears should be the precursors of some sentence whose severity, however merited, even your own heart has the generosity to regret,—which pity alone withholds you from uttering.”

During this speech, he looked so unfeignedly anxious, so seriously alarmed, that restoring to him the hand which, but a few moments before, I had withdrawn from his grasp,—

“ Can tears, then,” said I, “ flow from no causes unconnected either with sorrow or compassion? May they not sometimes be called forth by surprise, or—gladness?”

It would be utterly impossible to paint the ardent gratitude, the wild rapture, his looks and language equally expressed at the

conclusion of this little sentence. The sincerity of a noble heart was so unquestionably evident in every lineament of his fine countenance; his eyes beamed with such open and manly joy; his thanks were so energetic, his professions of eternal obligation, were uttered with such impassioned sensibility, that every doubt vanished from my mind; all power of retrospection was suspended, and I felt only alive to sentiments of the purest delight, the most perfect and entire security.

When mutually restored to some degree of composure, and able to converse with coherency, I made him promise to reply with frankness to whatever I should ask; and then, though not without a little hesitation, said,—

“You have certainly, now, very clearly explained the motive of your hasty journey! But, Mr. Lesmore, I am still as much as ever at a loss to comprehend, by what means you have so speedily succeeded in reconciling yourself to my uncle?”

“To elucidate this mystery,” answered

he, "it becomes requisite I should reveal to you some family arrangements, of a date considerably prior to our first interview at Highgrove Park, and which, however they may tend to aggravate in your eyes the perverseness of my conduct; I yet think myself bound, at a moment like the present, when all reserve should be banished, candidly and humbly to submit to your indulgence. My beloved Geraldine little suspects," added he, with evident confusion, "that, even from our earliest years, we were destined for each other ! that, unhappily, before I knew her, I was apprised of the conditional, but long cherished project of our friends; that in the sensitive jealousy of opinionated prerogative, dignified by me with the high-sounding appellation of independence of mind, I argued myself into such a thorough detestation of a union which militated so decidedly against my romantic intolerance of control, that many months previous to being introduced at Mr. Archer's, the incessant object of my contemplation was, how to escape, without occasioning a breach

between our families, the unmerited honour which was designed me.”

I interrupted him in this part of a confession, not wholly void of mortification to us both, and said with a smile,—

“ I had, indeed, no suspicion of the terms upon which you were invited ! Poor struggling victim ! how I should have pitied you had I known the singular embarrassment in which you were involved ! But why did you not, after we met, and you found me yet more odious than you perhaps expected, why did you not make public your reluctance, and quit the house ? To own the truth, you might at that time have done it without leaving me absolutely inconsolable ! ”

“ Strange would it have been if you had ! But my fair, sarcastic friend, do you know, it was that very indifference you so unaffectedly manifested as to my opinion and feelings, which first dispelled the mist that obscured my reason, and overthrew the inconceivable apathy which rendered me insensible to the happiness of being encouraged to aspire to the honour of your hand ?

Without a shadow of coquetry, your calm and easy manners, your complete disregard of my proceedings, your carelessness whether or not I did justice to your admirable talents, paid homage to your beauty, or was charmed by your temper and understanding: these, all combined to surprise, disturb, and pique me! I will not now trace the progress of a passion, which insinuated itself into my breast by such unusual, and even unsuspected degrees. Let me only add, that at the period when you received from the envied Litchmere, a service you requited with a gratitude so touching, I had, by some proofs of the sincerity of my regard for your revered Madame de St. Hermine, succeeded so happily in establishing between yourself and me a dawning of confidence and intimacy, that I was on the very eve of addressing to Mr. Archer the most penitential recantation of all past repugnance, and of supplicating him to exert his interest with you in my behalf. The workings of suspicion, the misgivings, perhaps, of conscious demerits, silenced and discouraged

me. Lord Litchmere, to my utter confusion, had chosen me for the confident of his attachment; I was not so misled by wrong-headed delicacy, as to think myself bound, in consequence of so undesired a communication, to abandon my own cause, and renounce the contest: but such was the seriousness, and apparent sincerity of his passion, that it led me to regard him as the most formidable of rivals; and I was driven, partly by timidity, partly by pride, to stand aloof; and with sullen, but watchful apprehension, silently to await the operations of time, the result of your own deliberations, and the event of Lord Litchmere's assiduities."

"Whatever may be in store for us hereafter," said I, interrupting him with mock gravity, "you have at least convinced me, Mr. Lesmore, in the progress of this little explanation, that in possessing your good opinion, I have the honour to be distinguished by a man, gifted with the virtue of self-command in its most superlative degree! I really admire your prudence in commit-

ting the interests of your heart to the *operations of time* ! It was truly philosophical ! and in the end, could not but have ensured some excellent result ; since time, after all, certainly administers better to the cure of love, than any other agent upon record ! ”

He laughed off this ironical encomium with a very good grace, and said,—

“ You think then, my charming Geraldine, that had I waited thirty years longer, my recovery would have been complete ? If ever I am released from my present bondage, and forfeit my freedom to another, I will make trial of your prescription. In the case now under consideration, I much doubt whether it would have been effectual. Time seemed only to add to my attachment and my inquietude ; and the passive plan I had adopted, brought with it a thousand mortifications ; necessitated a thousand sacrifices ; and called forth a thousand self-accusations. I soon found the difficulties of my situation intolerable. I had not constancy and firmness sufficient, to support with consistency the part I had condemned

myself to perform. I saw no termination to my suspense; I was in hourly danger of betraying myself; and, at last, living in a perpetual state of irritation and self-imposed constraint, I fled like a coward from the scene of action, preferring all suffering, all misery, to that of residing under the same roof with the woman I loved, without thinking myself at liberty to declare my sentiments, without being able to ascertain the nature of her own."

"You were, then, under no real engagement with Mr. Melwyn?"

"None, I acknowledge, which I might not easily have evaded. Mr. Archer, by no means aware of this truth, invited me, as you may perfectly recollect, with unsuspecting kindness, to join the party he purposed assembling round him at Christmas. I long neglected this invitation; my heart was with you, yet I hesitated more than once, whether I should avail myself of it at all. The predicament in which you were placed at my departure, I had every reason to believe remained unaltered; Lord Litch-

mere was still hovering near you ; and your decision respecting him still remained a secret. Notwithstanding these discouraging circumstances, an irresistible, undefinable impulse, drove me, at length, to seek again the very trial from which I so recently shrunk and absconded. What a reception awaited me ! Provoked, no doubt, as was its severity, yet how cruelly did it wound and afflict me ! Let me never cease, however, to remember, the alleviating softness with which you, my angelic Geraldine, the only one present whom I had personally offended, studied to support, console, and cheer me, during a moment so pregnant with humiliation ! Had I, till then, remained unmoved by your excellencies, a conduct so generous, a sweetness so benevolently timed, must have bound me to you, in chains of indissoluble gratitude, love, and admiration ! ”

I was touched by the look and tone of sensibility with which these acknowledgements were uttered ; and, oh, how richly repaid for the little sacrifice I had made

of female pique,—the efforts I had exerted on the mutually-painful evening to which he alluded! We were both silent a few minutes, both absorbed in reflections delightful to our hearts. He was the first to resume the discourse.

“ I knew enough of the intimacy and relationship subsisting between Lord Litchmere and Mr. Glenoswald, to be aware, that I had every thing to dread from the meditated journey to this place. It appeared to me utterly impossible, that Mr. Archer could have determined to expose both himself and you, to the fatigues of so distant an expedition, during the rigours of mid-winter, had no purpose been in contemplation beyond the mere ceremony of a common visit. I had incurred his displeasure, and alienated his regard, whilst Lord Litchmere, who evidently was blessed with both, it was equally evident, was elated to a degree of transport by the project you had in view, and seemed to conceive from it the most sanguine hopes. With what despondency, meanwhile, what mournful presages,

did I see you ascend the carriage which was to convey you hither, and depart from the once-friendly mansion in which I had endured, in their fullest extent, the vicissitudes of happiness and pain! I will not undertake to describe the wretched state of my mind from that period, till the delicious instant, when I was informed of your positive and unquestionable refusal of the union which had been proposed to you! Once again, I found myself at liberty to step forward; to supplicate, and, from the heartfelt earnestness of those supplications, to anticipate the forgiveness of your uncle; to predict, relying upon my reiterated experience of your unequalled sweetness, your inexhaustible goodness, to predict, even from you, an act of grace, a merciful oblivion of all former misdemeanors, errors, pride, and infatuation!"

I could not but feel, and express, the most grateful sense of the perfect frankness, the generous candour, with which he had accounted for many parts of his conduct that had appeared to me so wholly inex-

plicable. Our conversation, long as it had been, might not have terminated here; but hearing the dining-parlour door opened, I suddenly started up, unwilling to be found, by the three gentlemen, still engaged in so earnest a *tête-à-tête*; and before Mr. Lesmore could prevent it, made my exit at an opposite door, and flew, unperceived, to my own room.

And now, dearest madam, though, till very lately, you have not, I believe, been aware of the nature of my sentiments for Mr. Lesmore, and can have no idea of what I suffered during the painful period of my incertitude, yet, will not you congratulate me upon this happy result of our conference? Will not you rejoice, that your Geraldine is spared the mortification of finding she had bestowed her heart upon one who regarded her with indifference? whom her own precipitance and susceptibility alone, induced her to distinguish? You perceive, dearest madam, I was not the first to imbibe the attachment we have mutually avowed. Nay, in justice to myself let me

acknowledge, that however silent Mr. Lesmore has been, till now, upon the subject, his looks, the tone of his voice in addressing me, an occasional sentence unguardedly uttered,— in short, a thousand undefinable, minute, and, but to myself, scarcely perceptible indications, had pointed out to me, long ago, the real state of his feelings. It is true my suspense was very little softened by this persuasion; since I saw him perpetually struggling against the influence he had insensibly permitted me to acquire over him: but it was some consolation to my pride, (*I* have a little pride as well as himself!) or, rather let me call it delicacy; and enabled me better to support an anxiety, which I had so much reason to believe was reciprocal.

In less than ten minutes after I had quitted the drawing-room, my uncle followed me to my own apartment. He approached me with a benignity in his looks, an air of congratulation and pleasure that extremely affected me.

“ My darling girl,” cried he, embracing

me, "this is one of the happiest days of my life; of that life whose principal object of solicitude for eighteen years, has been your prosperity and welfare! Heaven bless you, my precious Geraldine! and preserve to you hereafter the power you have hitherto so singularly possessed, of contributing, by the mere sight of your own contentment, to that of all your friends! So truly are you beloved, that to behold your face decked in smiles, is motive sufficient to gladden the heart of every being who approaches you!"

I wept, in speechless gratitude, upon his shoulder, and for some time he permitted me to indulge this emotion without a check; but, at last, gently raising my face, and wiping away the tears with which it was bathed, he began talking of Mr. Lesmore; of his long established partiality for him; of the high opinion he had of his honour and principles; of the excellence of his temper, and the liberality of his mind; and, without positively acknowledging that an union between us had ever been projected, he undesignedly dropped so many insinuations

which might bear that interpretation, that, but for the recent dialogue I have been relating, it would have perplexed me intolerably to divine his meaning.

We descended together to tea. My cheeks glowed with consciousness, and I felt most painfully embarrassed, on first entering the room in which the gentlemen were assembled: but the perfect delicacy of their conduct speedily re-assured me: no allusions were made to Mr. Lesmore's long desertion of the eating-room; no significant glances were directed towards me; I was received with easy and natural cheerfulness; and my appearance produced no other effect, than that of interrupting, for a few moments, the conversation in which they had been previously engaged.

The plan of paying a visit at Parkton Castle, was discussed in the course of the evening. Mr. Lesmore pleaded the cause of his mother and Julia with great zeal and eloquence; my uncle, however, still wavered, and the decision of the affair being referred to me, I could not deny myself the

pleasure of complying with the united wishes of persons so dear, and gave my vote in favour of spending, at least, a few days in Shropshire. I was so gratefully thanked for this concession, that although it necessarily retards, dearest madam, the moment of our re-union I could not very seriously reproach myself for the delay. It will be but short, and I know you will forgive it.



Jan. 31.

How transient is unmixed felicity! A passing cloud has already obscured the serenity of that sunshine which yesterday glowed with so pure and vivid a lustre. But I hope it is dispersed, never again to hover over us, never even to recur to our remembrance.

Soon after breakfast this morning, whilst Jane was assisting me in my own room to prepare for a walk Mr. Lesmore had engaged me to undertake with him, she suddenly inquired, and without looking much

pleased, whether he was come to persuade us to go to Parkton Castle?

“Yes, Jane, he has pressed the visit very earnestly, and I believe we shall go. Are you dissatisfied with the plan?”

“Dear, ma’am, what signifies the dissatisfaction of such a one as I? If you and my master choose it, to be sure, that’s quite enough. Only I was thinking, it was very likely to be just such another dismal place as this; and I could not see what great pleasure there could be in going about, in winter time, from one lonesome, ruined, forlorn house to another.”

“What makes you think so very ill of Parkton Castle?”

“Why its *name*, ma’am, for one thing; for who would ever call a new-built house, a *castle*? and besides, Mr. Lesmore’s own man confesses, it’s a monstrous ancient place. He has lived there till he takes a pride, as one may say, in it’s age; but, dear ma’am, for those who a’n’t used to such gloomy, rambling buildings, they are mortal disa-

greeable, except only to read about in a story book."

"Mr. Lesmore, then, is quite out of favour with you for having proposed this scheme?"

"Every one for himself, you know, ma'am, in this world. Mr. Lesmore has only done what I should have done, perhaps, in his place; tried to get those he likes into his house. I don't wonder at him a bit, and some time ago, I should, for a particular reason, have been very glad of it. Squire Lesmore is quite the gentleman; and none of the family at Highgrove Park ever refused to give him a good word, or were against wishing his visitings there might come to some good end: but, I own, I don't much wish about it now."

Though it was not very difficult to understand what her wishes *had* referred to, I could by no means divine, whence proceeded the change they seemed to have undergone.

"You speak very mysteriously, Jane,"

said I, smiling; “ but if I comprehend you rightly, Mr. Lesmore has, in some way or other, had the misfortune to offend you.”

“ Offend *me* ? dear, ma’am, never in his born days ! Whenever I used to meet him about the house, he always looked as pleasant as could be, and very often spoke, just as civil as if I had been a lady. Oh no, indeed, ma’am, he has never affronted me by any manner of means : all I meant was, that since the time of those secret letters between him and Mrs. Neville, which young Madam St. Hermine was so busy about, I have never been able to like him half so well as I used to do, nor to think him half so honest and true of heart.”

Would you believe it, dearest madam ? Till these suspicious letters were thus unexpectedly brought back to my recollection, I had forgotten every thing that had passed concerning them, and the extreme uneasiness, which, at the time of their discovery, it cannot be denied, they occasioned me. Jane’s unwelcome allusion to the subject, cast an immediate gloom over my spirits.

made no answer to any thing she further said: but, thoughtful and dejected, slowly descended the stairs, and found Mr. Lesmore waiting for me in the hall.

He gently reproached me for the length of time I had been gone; and, drawing my arm within his, hurried me into the Park.

The involuntary change in my countenance and manners, you will readily conceive, did not long escape his observation: He regarded me several times with surprise and alarm, and at last anxiously said,—

“What is it renders Miss Fauconberg so silent and so grave? Something, I am sure, has grieved or displeased her!”

I tried to assume a less serious aspect, and even attempted to deny there was any foundation for his conjectures: but he persisted so earnestly in asserting that my looks bore testimony to the justice of the charge, and besought me, with an air so suppliant, to intrust him with the cause of my disturbance, that my original purpose of concealment was shaken, and I hesitatingly replied,—

“You would have some right, perhaps,

Mr. Lesmore, to think me influenced by capricious ill-humour, were the traces of uneasiness you perceive in my countenance to remain wholly unexplained. Yet, will it be very distressing to me to speak; and what I have to say, may be very embarrassing to you."

"Good Heaven! am I then, in any manner, the author of your disquiet? How you afflict and shock me!—Be explicit, dearest Miss Fauconberg; tell me, how have I, since our last night's open and unreserved conference, how have I had the unhappiness to give you pain?"

I paused a few moments to gain courage, and then said,—

"The noble frankness you displayed throughout the explanation to which you allude, now entitles you to equal frankness from me. Forgive the freedom of the inquiry I am going to put to you; ask me not what has revived this affair in my memory; but tell me, sir, are you apprised, that a correspondence you held with a lady, whilst at Highgrove Park, of a somewhat extraor-

dinary nature, from its intended secrecy, ever came to my knowledge?"

He coloured, and was evidently perplexed and disconcerted; but after a short silence,—

“I cannot prevaricate,” answered he, with firmness, yet with concern, “I cannot, Miss Fauconberg, deny that the correspondence you speak of, I am perfectly aware, *was* mentioned to you at the very period when it was passing. It would have been one of the first subjects I should have endeavoured, when permitted to address you with confidence, fully, and plainly to have cleared up. But it is not in my power! Pardon me for saying, I had hoped, from the acquaintance you have with my character, and the reliance I had flattered myself you place in my honour, that, after the declarations I have presumed to make to you; after the motives I have with sincerity assigned, for every circumstance connected with my conduct since first I had the happiness of becoming known to you, all doubt

of my rectitude and truth would have been banished from your mind ! Can Miss Fauconberg indeed do me such extreme injustice as to imagine, for an instant, I would insult her with professions of attachment, whilst, in the slightest degree, occupied by another woman ? ”

Though deeply hurt, no look, no tone, no gesture, indicated in him either fallacy, equivocation, or disguise. His eye sought not to avoid mine, his head was erect, his articulation steady ; and the dignity of injured, or, more properly speaking, sorrowing integrity, sat upon his brow.

“ Your voice, your countenance, your words,” cried I, stretching forth to him my hand, “ carry irresistible conviction to my heart ! You are, you must be, the undissembling, upright Lesmore I long believed you, and I again own myself yours, without a shadow of distrust, without a thought to your prejudice, or a wish even for further exculpation ! ”

“ Generous and most beloved Geraldine ! ” exclaimed he, pressing my hand with

transport to his lips, "how sweetly does this touching proof of confiding esteem, accord with the thousand instances I have witnessed, of the noble and unsuspecting candour of your nature! Who could impose upon, or seek to beguile, a disposition so liberal, a heart so pure, a mind so incapable of persisting in a harsh or erroneous opinion?"

And thus, dearest madam, arose, and, I trust, for ever blew over, the dark speck, that, for a moment, lowered in our horizon. You have not hitherto found reason to attribute to me a jealous and distrustful nature. Surely, the remembrance of this ambiguous correspondence, will not prey with such fatal influence upon my mind, as to subvert its best qualities, and rob me of that peaceful security, that fearless reliance, with which I have ever yet reposed upon the faith and honour of those I love! But here let me finally drop the cheerless subject.

During a long ramble, and afterwards when alone with him in the library, I gave Mr. Lesmore some account of the circumstances attending the early part of my resi-

dence in our present abode. This led to a request, that I would permit him to see the picture (he knew not that it was my mother's), my resemblance to which had produced in Mr. Glenoswald such overpowering emotion; and I promised that Jane, before we went to dress, should convey it to his apartment.

After this, I could not forbear inquiring by what means the report of Lord Litchmere's visit and rejection had so speedily travelled to Parkton Castle?

Mr. Lesmore smiled, and drawing from his pocket a letter, which he held out to me—

“You shall know all,” said he; “it is, and ever will be the purest joy of my heart to answer every enquiry you can make, which honour forbids me not to satisfy, with unlimited sincerity. Read this letter, my Geraldine. Its urgency, I hope you are convinced, was not necessary to hasten my determination. The intelligence it conveyed to me of Lord Litchmere's failure; the certainty that your affections were

disengaged ; these were the seducing motives, the irresistible inducements, that brought me—that would have sped me, on the wings of hope and joy, to the remotest regions of the globe !”

He then seated himself upon the sofa near me, and whilst I eagerly perused the letter he had intrusted to me, watched its effect upon my countenance, and followed my impatient eye.

Let the extraordinary scroll speak for itself. I refused immediately to part with it, purposing to seize an opportunity of transcribing it for your perusal*.

Could I be seriously displeased at an interference conducted with so scrupulous a regard to the preservation of my secret? dictated by such disinterested, such truly friendly motives? Mr. Glenoswald is not to be judged by common rules ; else, might it, indeed, be allowed, as he himself observes, that such a step was wholly contrary to those regulations of *etiquette*, which the

* The letter here alluded to, is that which was addressed to Mr. Lesmore by Mr. Glenoswald.

world considers as indispensable towards the strict maintenance of propriety and decorum. But his is a character, his are feelings, which, naturally tinged with romance, and elevated rather than blunted by the species of malady he has suffered, render him, at this very moment, as susceptible of sympathy, as enthusiastic and sentimental, as a youth, gifted with a poetical imagination, in the first glow of sanguine benevolence, the first zeal of unadulterated simplicity! Luckily—may I not be permitted to say, for all parties?—he met, in Mr. Lesmore, with an almost kindred spirit; and his admonitions, far from being slighted, contemned, or resented, found their way straight to the heart to which they were addressed.



Feb. 2.

EVERY thing is arranged, dearest madam, for our departure from this house to-morrow. I look forward with delight to the prospect of visiting Parkton Castle; for,

independent of the inhabitants it contains, it is a place I have heard so much spoken of, that I am truly anxious to become acquainted with it. Mr. Lesmore says, that having, in all the repairs it has, at various times, undergone, been carefully preserved from injudicious alterations; from any admission of modern improvements, patched upon, and awkwardly contrasting with the original structure, he flatters himself it is a style of building I shall peculiarly approve.

Mr. Glenoswald sets out at the same moment with ourselves, on a visit to his friend, Lord Litchmere. This is the first time he has ever prevailed upon himself, to abandon his solitude—to take a peep at the world, since the fatal events occurred which drove him into retirement. He promises, if his nerves enable him to bear what he calls the “hum of men” with tolerable firmness, he will, on quitting his friend, spend a short time with us at Highgrove Park. No less an inducement, however, was requisite to draw him from seclusion, than the desire and

hope of contributing to the good of a fellow-being.

And now, dearest madam, farewell. I shall write again on our arrival at Parkton Castle, where our stay is somewhat uncertain; but where I hope to hear from you, and shall most impatiently await your opinion—may I add, sanction? of all that has recently occurred.

Adieu, my kind and ever respected friend!

Believe me, unchangeably yours,

GERALDINE FAUCONBERG.

LETTER XVI.

MADAME DE ST. HERMINE TO THE HONOURABLE
MRS. NEVILLE.

Madam, Woodville, Feb. 4.

BEFORE you have proceeded through a page of this letter, you will cease to wonder that I should forbear attempting to preface it with vain apologies. So incredible is the liberty I am on the point of taking, and so well am I aware of the unfavourable constructions that may be put upon my officiousness, that were I not determined to hazard the utmost effects of your displeasure, I could not summon courage for the task I have undertaken.

Pardon my abruptness, therefore; since, where no humility of intercession could be equivalent to the perpetration of a wilful offence, hesitation, or the parade of diffidence in committing it, would be but mockery.

The time was, madam, when, in common

with the natural friends of my long-loved, and most amiable pupil, Miss Fauconberg, I was anxious for the accomplishment of a union, many years in meditation, between her and Mr. Lesmore. It were impossible to express the high opinion I entertained of him: the simple acknowledgement that I ever deemed him worthy the hand of Geraldine, sufficiently explains the distinguished light in which I viewed him. On their first meeting, the impression each produced upon the other, was so unpromising, so little in unison with the family wishes, that some amongst those who had been most sanguine in anticipating their mutual regard, began to despair of ever beholding them upon terms even of common friendship. Allow me to boast, that I was not of this desponding number. Whilst Mr. Lesmore, however cool and distant, was open in his conduct, and frank amidst prejudice and misconception, I steadily maintained an opinion, that the day would inevitably arrive, when the veil would drop from before his eyes; when he would render ample justice to the fair creature he now so proudly slight.

ed. My prognostics were gradually verified ; he was too candid to be above retracting a mistaken opinion ; he saw, he felt, all her value, and sedulously endeavoured to dissipate from her memory every trace of his former injustice and indifference.

I need not, madam, to you, who know Mr. Lesmore, expatiate upon his powers, whenever he chooses to exert them, of pleasing—his abilities to entertain—his capacity to interest. Geraldine, tormented by no inordinate vanity, and, therefore, easy to be propitiated even by him who had put her self-love to the severest test ; encouraged by the tacit, but smiling, approbation of her friends, Geraldine could not long remain insensible to the attentions of such a man, rendered yet more fascinating, perhaps, by the contrast they formed to his previous negligence. He insensibly made himself master of her whole heart ; and it was a treasure, which, at that time, he seemed to estimate as it deserved—to regard as a sacred trust—to repay with adoration. No verbal explanation had yet passed between them ; the language of the

eyes was all that had suggested to either, a suspicion of what the other felt. At this critical period, madam—I tremble at my own temerity, and, resolutely as I began, scarcely dare proceed—at this most interesting juncture, to themselves, and all who were solicitous for their happiness, the unsought, and unwelcome discovery was made to Geraldine, of a cautious, mysterious, but regular correspondence carried on—between you, madam, and her unacknowledged, it is true, but insidious admirer!

A circumstance so inexplicable filled our minds with vague apprehensions, with perplexity and wonder. Mr. Archer, it is true, was carefully held in ignorance of what was passing: but I saw all these emotions depicted upon the countenance of my young charge, though her lips gave no utterance to her feelings; and Julia Lesmore and myself amply participated in her inquietude.

All now was changed; and a system of unexplained, yet undisguised reserve, usurped the place of that manifest conformity of sentiments and affections, which had so late-

ly reigned between the now embarrassed, and distrustful lovers—for such they still were—Geraldine, in the midst of stifled anxiety; Mr. Lesmore, whilst pertinaciously engaged in a suspicious correspondence with the only woman, perhaps, Miss Fauconberg excepted, whom he ever seriously admired. I say this, madam, first, from positive belief of the fact, and next, in vindication of the part I am now performing. Had I not known how high you ranked in Mr. Lesmore's opinion, should I have felt the thousand pangs and fears that have assailed me?—But mark the sequel—

Lord Litchmere, after long hesitation and diffidence has, very recently, made proposals to Mr. Archer for his niece. These, though most urgently supported by his Lordship's warm and zealous friend, Mr. Glenoswald, have been declined; and, on the reception of this intelligence, as if so long withheld from declaring himself by no other motive than the fear of encountering a rival, Mr. Lesmore instantly pursued my Geraldine into Wales; openly professed his attachment—has been

favourably listened to, and is now considered in the light of an accepted lover.

I will candidly acknowledge, that when I first perused the letter which communicated to me this sudden revolution in Miss Fauconberg's prospects, joy was the only sentiment that found its way to my heart.—My former partiality for Mr. Lesmore revived; whatever was painful to my recollection, seemed, for a while, to have taken flight; and the image of Geraldine happy—Geraldine justly appreciated by the possessor of her own pure and disinterested heart, blinded me to the yet existing objections against an union upon the point of being concluded on such unequal terms. Mr. Lesmore, without the slightest cause of distrust—with a rational, full, and perfect confidence in the undivided affection of his promised bride,—leads her to the altar with a cloud of impenetrable obscurity enveloping his own actions—at least, the spring that directed one of the most questionable of his life. Even to my youthful and ingenuous pupil, in the height of her new-born and modestly-avowed felicity, the remembrance

of that one unexplained transaction involuntarily recurs—poisons the cup of happiness—she, for a moment, believed was destined to approach her lips without the mournful mixture of any bitter ingredient, and strikes through her apprehensive heart a pang of pungent anguish. The honourable assurances of Mr. Lesmore, whom she had the courage to interrogate, have, for a time, tranquillized her spirits, and lulled her fears: but he resolutely evades all disquisition upon the subject, and preserves as inflexible a secrecy concerning it, as previous to the moment that gave Geraldine a privilege to share in all his thoughts, to participate in all his feelings.

Were Mr. Archer sensible of the drawback to his niece's complete contentment, I am persuaded he would yet retract his consent to the match. He would feel, with me, justly apprehensive, that a mystery such as this, is, of all others, most inevitably calculated to sow the seeds of wretchedness between a married pair; he would, when aware, as I am, that your private epistolary intercourse with Mr. Lesmore still subsisted a very few

weeks ago,—nay, perhaps, was at this very time maintained, he would learn to consider the new pretender to his Geraldine's favour as an artful double-dealer—perfidious, at once, to two of the most distinguished, and, in their several ways, most fascinating of women!—Whilst impressed with this opinion, could I, who know all that has hitherto been concealed from Mr. Archer, could I, without treachery, remain wholly passive; suffer a negociation to proceed, which it may be criminal in Mr. Lesmore to carry on; by which, at one fatal stroke, he may perjure himself—wrong you—and doom Geraldine to endless misery?

I come now, with very solemn feelings, to the main purport for which this letter was begun—a purport I found it necessary to introduce by a clear and explicit statement of the actual situation of affairs. The moment is arrived, when mystery, the parent or offspring of evil, should finally, for the peace, honour, and advantage of all parties, be thrown aside. I ask you, therefore, Mrs. Neville, and, on your answer depends the

issue of Mr. Lesmore's addresses to Miss Fauconberg,—what has been the tendency of that correspondence you have both so unwisely sought, by every precaution and reserve, to render problematical? If it never was of the tender nature I have involuntarily conjectured, why has it been secret? Why, even if it was, has it been so guardedly concealed? Can *you* have any interest in assisting to delude Miss Fauconberg, and her friends? I cannot harbour such an idea without self-reproach! But, tell me, are you aware of the marriage now in contemplation? If you are, and can, conscientiously, relieve our minds by an explicit declaration, that Mr. Lesmore has given you no claim to his faith, yours is precisely the character from which I should most confidently expect such an act of justice, of integrity, of indispensable duty. If, on the contrary, you are aggrieved by the disposal he is preparing to make of his hand; if the arrangements that are forming, have been kept from your knowledge, and clash with his preceding vows, speak, Mrs. Neville—speak, whilst your rival, if

such indeed she is, yet preserves her liberty, yet retains the power of renouncing, with fortitude and dignity, a connexion so utterly beneath her merit.

I have the honour to be, madam, your most obedient, humble servant,

CONSTANCE DE ST. HERMINE.

LETTER XVII.

MISS LESMORE TO MRS. LUMLEY.

Parkton Castle,
Feb. 5.

LAST night, dearest Augusta, I had the unspeakable pleasure of welcoming to this house, of embracing, *as a sister*, our beloved, and more than ever interesting, and amiable, Geraldine. My short letter * of Saturday informed you, that Mr. Archer had written to my mother, announcing his design of being here, with his niece and Ferdinand, early in the course of the ensuing week. At the same time, he congratulated himself and her upon the fortunate result of Lesmore's journey into Wales; but referred us, for all particulars, to the moment of our general meeting. My mother, as well as myself, having, as you know, seen Mr. Glenoswald's letter,

* This letter does not appear.

were tolerably prepared to wait with patience for what further remained to be explained. From the instant I became assured Lord Litchmere's addresses had been declined, I felt an internal confidence of Ferdinand's success, which nothing but the difficulties that might attend his accounting for the enigmatical letters that passed between himself and Mrs. Neville had power to shake. Either he possesses, however, in the most supreme degree, the talent of subjugating curiosity, and repelling inquiry; or, he has met, in the trusting Geraldine, the very phoenix of patient females! That the precious epistles I allude to were, on one side or other, what people commonly call *love letters*, I have no more doubt than of my own existence! I do not believe they were so on the gentleman's part, it is true; but before I consented to marry a man who had been engaged in so clandestine an intercourse with one of the most charming women in England, I should have thought it very advisable to be perfectly *sure* of the fact: and, however Geraldine's mistaken delicacy, or high-wrought gene-

rosity, may, for the present, have silenced her doubts, I am very certain she will henceforward never hear Mrs. Neville's name pronounced—never meet her in person—nor be told that my brother has met her, without experiencing an acute sensation of uneasiness. It is ridiculous to suppose their correspondence had any relation to *business*; what business, at least of a serious or secret nature, could she have to consult him about, that it might not have been ten times more worth her while to transact with her attorney? Besides, the time when Sir Henry Tresilian was so cavalierly dismissed from Westhill, was it not precisely at the moment when those odious missives were passing? Might not that dismissal have been given with a view of flattering Ferdinand? Augusta, you will say I am uncharitably censorious: my apology is, that I am jealous for the peace and happiness of Geraldine; and sorry she should enter into engagements with any man, even a brother so dear to me, whose whole conduct, at least since he pro-

fessed to love her, has not been such as will fearlessly bear investigation.

I was in the hall, ready to receive her, as she alighted from the carriage, and read, with delight, upon her smiling countenance the serenity of a heart at ease—the happy look of a perfectly confiding spirit. Ferdinand, of the two, appears to me, at times, the least placid. He perhaps experiences a few of the qualms inseparable, in a noble mind, from the consciousness of acting with disingenuousness towards an affectionate and relying nature. Upon the whole, however, his aspect and manners indicate the most grateful and animated joy.

This morning, by way of doing the honours of the Castle, we have conducted Geraldine over every part of this rambling, but entertaining, old mansion. She has ascended the eastern and western towers, surveyed the venerable chapel, been through all the principal bed-chambers, peeped into the china-closet, visited the armoury, taken a hasty view of the picture-gallery, and even

descended into those horrid subterraneous passages and dungeons, which, when we were children, we have so often, Caroline, you, and I, in a compact body, tremblingly explored,—and, with exalted imaginations, quitted, in the full persuasion they were inhabited by supernatural beings, who had the faculty of rendering themselves audible, though not, perhaps, the power of becoming visible to our senses. The echoes in these chill and perplexing labyrinths are marvellous: and the iron chair in the central vault, with the rusty collar suspended over it by a ponderous chain, excite such dreadful ideas of torture and cruelty, that I never behold them without shuddering.

We terminated our long ramble by a visit to what Ferdinand calls his study, but what might more properly be denominated his receptacle of oddities; for it includes, upon a limited scale, every thing that a crazy-brained collector, or a professed artist, would be anxious to amass together. It was locked up when you were here last, Augusta; you can, therefore, have no idea of the extraordi-

nary effect, at least to an *ignoramus* like me, of such an heterogeneous assemblage. Here stands a cast of the beautiful, but severe, Apollo Belvedere; there, a model of some Pagan temple; in one place, a *layman*, as large as life, decorated with drapery, which having been put on wet, has dried extremely stiff and unpliant, and is, moreover, become so dingy and dusty, it is scarcely possible to guess what was its original hue or texture. A little further, you behold a precious cabinet of gems; then a portfolio of prints; a few paces beyond, lie two or three drawers containing coins; and next, you stumble over a bronze greyhound, or knock your foot against an alabaster sarcophagus. After that, comes a table, covered with fossils and minerals; then look up, and you see a landscape of Salvator Rosa's, and hanging next to it, a company of boors at cards, by Teniers. Proceed but a few steps, and you encounter a roll of maps; a pallet for colours; an Etruscan vase; an antique lamp; a celestial globe; specimens of lava; a bust of Niobe, and two of her beautiful daugh-

ters, &c. &c. &c. Luckily, one side of the room, being fitted up with bookcases, preserves an appearance of something like order and regularity; else, this chaotic mass might be mistaken for the repository of a madman. Some of the things, I believe, belonged to my father: but I know Ferdinand adds to them whenever he has opportunity.

Geraldine was delighted with all this (I am afraid I was going to say *lumber*!) but however, I will call it *virtu*. She went about from place to place, examining every object with a curiosity and interest highly flattering to Lesmore's feelings; and manifested such congeniality of taste, such unaffected veneration for these relics or imitations of antiquity, that I was a thousand times more amused by watching her, than by looking at any of their lifeless curiosities. However, I was, at last, meditating how to make my escape, for I began to grow tired; but just then, perceiving an easel near one of the windows, supporting a picture apparently unfinished, and partly concealed by the number of intervening objects, she called me to

go and look at it with her. With some difficulty, in such a scene of confusion, we made our way up to it; and then beheld, with mutual surprise, a half-length portrait in oils, of Geraldine herself, painted from memory, and very strikingly like. This was such a testimony of the empire she possessed, even in absence, over my brother's thoughts, that I saw she was much affected by it, and, to enable him to complete the work to his satisfaction, she has consented to sit to him whenever he should require it.


But now, my dear Augusta, you will very probably ask me, what is become of a certain gentle youth, who, a few days back, honoured this habitation with his presence? Do not be alarmed; the gentle youth and I are upon excellent terms. I have no inclination to slight him, because it has pleased Heaven to send us a fresh importation of friends. But the fact is, he, at present, is not under this roof: he went yesterday on a little trip to Sir Theodore Talbot's, and we do not expect him back before the end of the week. It cannot be denied, that poor Arthur and I

have, of late, had a prodigious deal of each other's company;—I hope, neither party pretend to be tired;—but a little change may, for all that, be extremely good for both.

Feb. 8.

WE have all been to a grand ball at our gay neighbour's, Mr. Harley's; we have had a great deal of company at home. Arthur is returned, and I have not time for half I wish to write. But I must tell you, that Geraldine, who dispatched a full detail to Madame de St. Hermine, before she quitted Howel Court, of all that had recently occurred there, begins to be seriously uneasy at that lady's determined silence, and very painfully apprehensive that it is occasioned by disapprobation of the engagement about to be formed. I know not what to think myself. It is certain Madame de St. Hermine beheld Ferdinand with a very unfriendly eye the last time they met; and it would not, to speak the truth, by any means astonish me to find, that his late partially-explicit conduct was

considered by her as very inadequate atonement for all the reserve, coldness, and apparent caprice, that preceded it. My brother undergoes the utmost anxiety; for, in addition to his being extremely solicitous for Madame de St. Hermine's good opinion, he has every reason to fear, that, without her sanction, Geraldine could with difficulty be prevailed upon to confirm his hopes, and pledge to him her vows.



Feb. 10.

WE were walking, and cooing in pairs, this morning, Geraldine and Lesmore, Arthur and I, expatiating at intervals, and making very pretty poetical remarks upon the beauty of the day, the rapid and sudden approach of spring, and the astonishing quantity of early flowers, "whose cool and delicate odour," as somebody elegantly expresses it, "scarcely amounting to a perfume," regaled our senses during our progress through the pleasure-grounds, when a servant was, in great

haste, dispatched after us by my mother, to acquaint us that Monsieur de St. Hermine was just arrived from Woodville, and had brought a packet for Miss Fauconberg. She and her assiduous escort, aware of how much importance this information might be to both, instantly took flight, and, arm in arm, darted off like lightning towards the castle. Arthur and I, more leisurely followed; and when we entered the house, found only my mother sitting with our agreeable visitor. Geraldine having already secured possession of his dispatches, had carried them off to the breakfast-room, accompanied by Lesmore.

Now, what this unseen packet contains, is yet a complete mystery to me. Its two eager lecturers have not shown themselves since they opened it; no one has chosen to intrude upon them; and my paper being full, and the post just ready to set out, I must defer, till to-morrow, acquainting you with what I may be permitted to learn. Meanwhile, I am all anxiety and restlessness; for there are few things I should so much lament, as

any fresh obstacle to their long-delayed happiness.

Adieu, my dear sister. Yours, in some tribulation, but very affectionately,

JULIA LESMORE.

LETTER XVIII.

MADAME DE ST. HERMINE TO MISS FAUCONBERG.

Woodville, Feb. 8.

MY Geraldine has, I fear, thought me dilatory and unkind. The silence I have observed since the reception of her last letter, might well appear to justify every suspicion to my disadvantage: she knows I am not, in general, so deficient in punctuality; she probably remembers, with pain, that at our last interview Mr. Lesmore and I were less disposed than formerly to regard each other with friendship; and, perhaps, she has conjured up, in her timid imagination, a thousand chimerical apprehensions; pictured me as a foe to his cause; a sullen and inveterate disapprover of his pretensions.—Suppress, suppress, dear child of my affection! all such unfounded conjectures: their refutation is contained in

the sealed packet that accompanies this letter. It only reached me this day. Read every paper as it is numbered: that directed to me, and marked (1), will immediately point out to you the necessity I was under of delaying to write, after what I had hazarded, till this, or some other answer arrived from the person I had addressed.

But, before you proceed—before you permit yourself to take a glance at the signature of the important papers, committed to our honour, I charge you, let no one, save Mr. Lesmore, be present at their perusal, or even at their breaking open. When you have read them, I need not caution you to discretion. They must be restored by me to their generous owner; and, for that purpose, intrusted to my son, who promises, with the delay of one day only at Parkton Castle, to set out with them on his return hither.

Now, my most beloved Geraldine, with a fearless heart, take up the packet. I will not anticipate its contents: but, forgive me, if, for this once, I almost envy you the feelings

of happiness that will glow within your bosom!

Adieu! Yours, with unalterable affection,

CONSTANCE DE ST. HERMINE.

(*First Letter enclosed within the packet.*)

TO MADAME DE ST. HERMINE.

Faulkland Lodge.

Feb. 6.

HAD the imputations you insinuate, madam, nay, more,—pointedly urge against me, been merited, in how hateful a point of view, after the perusal of your letter, I should have appeared even to myself!—But in Mr. Lesmore's vindication, mine, as far as relates to the charge of *assisting to delude Miss Fauconberg*, will be comprehended. I have been guilty of much imprudence—exposed myself to the hazard of much censure; yet, an impeachment so heinous as this—a suspicion of artifice, treachery, systematic dissimulation, I have neither deserved, nor could have imagined the most inveterate enemy would have found a pretence to attribute to my nature! But let me not, at the instiga-

tion of indignant pride, waste words upon my own defence. Mr. Lesmore's is the cause that cries the loudest for justice,—and as amply as it is in my power to compel it from you, he shall obtain justice!

Do you know, Madame de St. Hermine, the noble being you have permitted yourself so barbarously to injure? Will it not penetrate you with shame and sorrow, when I tell you, he is one, who, in all that concerns me and my affairs, has shown himself so generously solicitous for my honour, so disinterestedly friendly, so wise, so delicate, so highly principled, that in the most perilous predicament of my life I owe to him, to his inestimable counsels, his manly sincerity, the preservation of my fame, peace of mind, existence in society—every thing most precious to the feelings, most indispensable to the heart of a female, not wholly degraded in her own eyes—not wholly lost to every virtuous sentiment.

I feel my anger subside as I enlarge upon this touching subject, and I could almost exclaim, even to you, cruel as you have been—

“ *Dear Madame de St. Hermine*, love such a man—honour, respect, and admire him as he deserves!”—Charming Geraldine! how I rejoice in her sensibility of his worth! His faithful attachment to her has long been known to me; its tardy disclosure has often been the subject of my wonder.—Ah! little did I imagine myself the fatal cause! I grieve to have been, however unintentionally, an obstacle to his speedier attainment of happiness; he was entitled from me to a better reward. But, late as it is, I still have power to make him some reparation—and I hesitate not in adopting the means, even at the risk of my own reputation!

As the highest pledge, then, of the sincerity of my good wishes for the unmixed and permanent felicity of Miss Fauconberg,—as a just tribute of gratitude to Mr. Lesmore, my preserver and benefactor, I intrust to your prudence and honour, the original of every letter I addressed to, or received from, Mr. Lesmore, during the period of that misjudged correspondence which has caused such

unfounded alarm. I kept no copies of those I myself wrote; but, as an additional testimony of the noble and considerate nature of him in whom I so frankly confided, I have to inform you, that the last letter I received from him was accompanied with the restoration of all those I had ever sent to him. Let Miss Fauconberg peruse these papers; and, while she condemns, perhaps, the presumptuous self-confidence, the erring judgement they betray, let her recollect the testimony I am voluntarily giving her, of my reliance upon her generosity and delicacy.—Let her recollect, in extenuation of my folly, that mine, like hers, has not been a youth spent under the discerning eye of a wise and virtuous monitress—that I never had a maternal guide, nor any enlightened friend, constantly at hand to supply the afflicting loss—that the voice of truth never reached my ear, till its sound penetrated from thence to my soul, through the organs of Mr. Lesmore—that its very first whisper stopped me in my mad career—made of me the truest convert, and

left me impressed with a diffidence so insurmountable, but, perhaps, so salutary, of my own strength, that I have surrendered the dangerous independence, once my boast, and committed the direction of my future conduct to the experience of one, whose ripened judgement, inflexible rectitude, yet lenient friendship, compel my esteem, secure my docility, and sooth my feelings. The invaluable protectress of whom I speak, is the lady from whose house I write—the nearly-faultless, yet truly amiable Lady Alicia Faulkland. I shall shortly accompany her to town; and in her house, and under her guidance, shall spend the gay and trying months of a London spring: fondly trusting, that a precaution against myself, which at least shows me to be so profoundly in earnest, will blot out some of my errors from the memory of those who know them, and save me from ever again incurring the dreadful hazard of having my name coupled with disgrace and infamy!

With the most zealous and heartfelt wishes for the prosperity and happiness of your love-

ly Geraldine, believe me, all resentment subdued, dear Madame de St. Hermine, respectfully and faithfully yours,

FREDERICA NEVILLE.

LETTER XX.

MISS FAUCONBERG TO MADAME DE ST. HERMINE:

Parkton Castle,
Feb. 10.

I HAVE just concluded the perusal of the touching, the unforeseen, the extraordinary packet!—In what words can I express, dearest madam, my deep sense of your benign, yet arduous exertions, to procure for me a refutation so complete of every lurking doubt? What pain such an application must have cost you! I, who so well know your habitual reluctance to place yourself in any prominent point of view—your dread of being taxed with officiousness—your patient and guarded character. I fully comprehend, and, I hope, duly feel, the merit of an effort, which, considering the previous struggle that must have passed in your own mind, may be deemed heroic! But what shall I say of Mrs.

Neville?—the generous, the frank, the incomparable Mrs. Neville! Language is unequal to the attempt of describing the sentiments of love, gratitude, and admiration with which she has filled my breast. Tell her, dearest madam, when you restore the precious papers—solemnly assure her, that her secret, thus nobly sacrificed to my tranquillity, shall live and die inviolably secure within my bosom! Tell her that, shocked to find, as I proceeded in her letter to you, that the communication with which she was about to intrust us, was so repulsive to her feelings, I would have forborne any examination of the correspondence, the disclosure of which had been thus extorted from her. But Mr. Lesmore himself opposed my scruples. He said, that whilst its concealment was committed to *his* honour alone, the united efforts of the world would not have induced him to betray the sacred trust; but that now, as Mrs. Neville herself had removed the interdict—as you, dearest madam, had already surveyed the papers, it would be to him a circumstance of unspeakable joy, to render his whole conduct

clear and unambiguous to me. Nothing, since the mutual avowal that had passed between us, had given him a moment's inquietude, save the consciousness, that, upon the subject in question, I was authorized to charge him with reserve.—The blest moment of unlimited sincerity was now arrived : he had made no selfish effort to accelerate its approach ; had been hopeless, indeed, that it would ever be permitted him to speak with openness upon so delicate an affair. Another, withheld by no such insurmountable obligations of forbearance, had stepped forward, and taken upon herself a negociation, from which a timid mind would have shrunk ; but which secures to us, by its fortunate result, the incalculable blessing of reciprocal, fearless, and durable confidence.

These arguments convinced and determined me.—I read, in the presence of their noble-minded writer, the fraternal, judicious, and salutary counsels, he had addressed to his interesting and candid correspondent. I wept with admiration and joy over proofs so affecting of the genuine worth of his nature ;

every sentiment exalted him in my esteem—endeared him to my heart. I felt humbled by the reflection, that I had ever been distrustful of so superior a character ; I could have sued to him for pardon had he suffered it. But, satisfied, nay grateful, to behold upon my countenance such tokens of undissembled approbation, conviction, and pleasure, he asked no more, but declared himself the happiest of men.

Our disinterested and warm-hearted Julia accepts, without a murmur, such excuses as we have been able to make to her, for confining to our own bosoms the secrets of the unexpected packet. She sees our faces animated with smiles of the purest felicity—she is aware the tidings communicated to us were of a gratifying nature—and, superior to all idle curiosity, shares tenderly in our contentment, without seeking to penetrate its source. Mr. Archer was not present at the delivery of the papers. Thus, the discretion enjoined us, escapes even the danger of exciting speculation ; and all, on our parts, shall be thankfulness, faithful silence, and delighted admiration.

Adieu, my ever dear and invaluable friend!
accept the united gratitude, and affectionate
respect, of your happy children,

GERALDINE FAUCONBERG,
FERDINAND LESMORE.

LETTER XXI.

MISS LESMORE TO MRS. LUMLEY.

Parkton Castle,
Feb. 11.

Monsieur de St. Hermine, my dear Augusta, is already on his road back to Woodville, and I know as little of the contents of the packet as when he came. Mr. Archer imagines he only brought an epistle of congratulation to Geraldine from his mother; and nothing has been said to undeceive him. Enchanted to witness the approaching accomplishment of her long-indulged and favourite project, *my* mother repines at no reserve; scarcely gives admission to any other wish than that of seeing Ferdinand happy in the way she first suggested. With regard to myself, such handsome excuses have been made to me, both by my brother and Geraldine, for declining, on this occasion, to admit me into their con-

fidence, that I am forced to put a good face upon the matter, and appear extremely reasonable and philosophical.

Mr. Archer and Geraldine leave us on Thursday next. They have sent word to Woodville, that they shall call for Madame de St. Hermine on their way home; or, at least, make it in their way to do so. Ferdinand, the day they depart, posts up to town to lose his temper, by "the law's delay," about settlements; a certain friend of mine does the same; and, for aught I know, the fond swains will travel together on the same wise errand. When they return, a general *rendezvous* is given to us all at Highgrove Park, where poor Geraldine, and your poor Julia, are, on the same day, and at the same hour, to receive, what is usually called the nuptial benediction: but what might, now and then, be more justly denominated by a sterner appellation, though it has a similar termination. All that, however, is as it may happen; so I mean to hope the best; to make a very good wife, and either to coax or laugh, never to argue, my liege lord

into making a very good husband ! When once we are fairly enthralled, Geraldine is to be brought back hither, and I am to be conveyed, being then the goods and chattels of another, to some boasted habitation in one of the ugliest counties in England. However, it is, for his misfortune, poor Arthur's birth-place ; and we must make the best of it. We shall all, I trust, meet in London, about the middle of March. But you and Mr. Lumley, as well as Caroline and Davenant, are to be invited to the double wedding.

Albert announced to us the prospect of a change in his affairs, that gave us all very sincere pleasure. Mr. Selforth, the guardian-brother of *la petite Claire*, appears disposed to relent towards her and his new relation ; and sanguine hopes are entertained, that he will make over to the young couple the fortune he holds in trust for his sister, without putting them to the inconvenience of further delay. In that case they will immediately provide themselves with a house of their own ; and dear Madame de St.

Hermine, though rendered wholly independent by Mr. Archer, will divide her days between the habitations of that long-tryed friend—of her son—and of the child of her adoption—the grateful and attached Geraldine.

Some good souls in this neighbourhood, who pretend to know more of other people's affairs than perhaps the parties themselves, prognosticate a match between Mrs. Neville, who, I believe, is still at Lady Alicia Faulkland's, and her ladyship's second son, a very distinguished young man, who, my informants report, has lately been down at Faulkland Lodge, and pays his mother's fascinating inmate the most marked attention. I wish the surmise may be well-founded; and Geraldine, I suspect, would not be backward in uniting her wishes to mine.

A letter arrived this morning from Mr. Glenoswald. The account he gives Geraldine of Lord Litchmere's health is somewhat more favourable than there seemed reason to expect. His lordship's faithful

Pylades remains with him till the eventful period of our projected meeting at Highgrove Park; and then he joins our party, and invites himself to be present at the formidable ceremony. I own, it will be a great gratification to me to behold a man, of whom I every day hear such high praises, as well from Geraldine and Lesmore as from Mr. Archer.

Heaven bless you, my dearest Augusta! Ah! when we meet, and I flatter myself you will not refuse granting me the support of your presence, how will all the flippancy I now struggle to retain be subdued and put to flight! But I shall find it again, I hope; and, as in days of yore, sign myself, when next I write,

Your light-hearted, but affectionate,

JULIA.

FINIS.



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